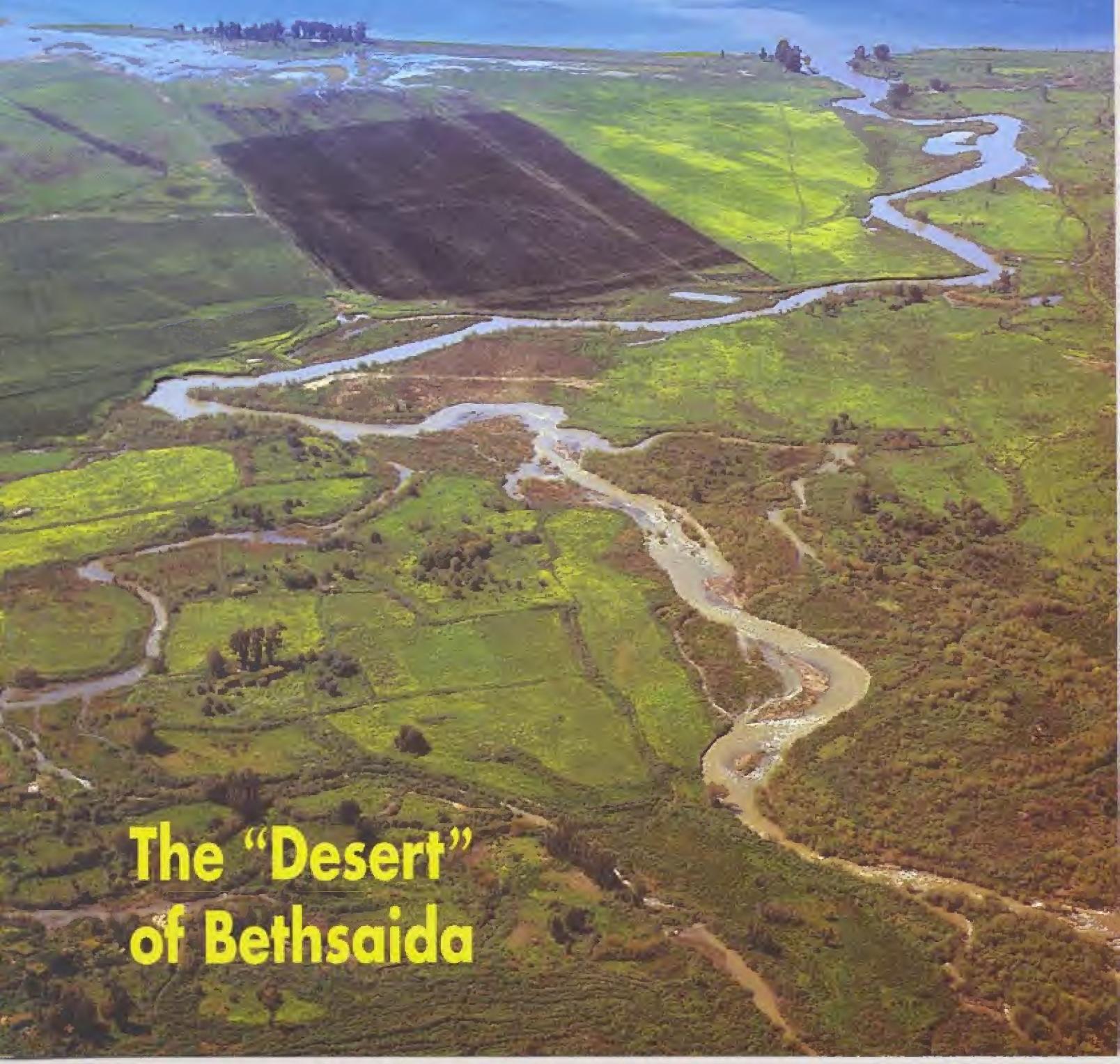


October – December 1997 • Number 53

Jerusalem

PERSPECTIVE



The “Desert”
of Bethsaida

Perspective on This Issue

An archaeological find at Qumran casts light on Acts 2-5. For an appraisal of this startling discovery, turn to page 12.

Last winter, an archaeological expedition led by Professor James Strange of the University of South Florida discovered two inscribed potsherds at Qumran. The larger of these, dating from 20–68 A.D., is a legal document in which a certain Honi deeds his property to the Qumran community, a clear parallel to the practice of the early church described in Acts 2, 4 and 5. In "Ostracon from Qumran Throws Light on First Church," p. 12, **David Flusser** assesses the importance of this discovery for New Testament research.

Flusser, a founding member of the Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research, is Professor Emeritus of Early Christianity and Judaism of the Second Temple Period at the Hebrew



University of Jerusalem. Flusser was born in Vienna in 1917. An internationally distinguished biblical scholar, he is noted for his work on the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Essenes, and first-century Judaism. Flusser studied classical philology at the University of Prague, lectured there from 1947 to 1950, and received a doctorate from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 1957. He is a member of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities. He was awarded the Israel Prize in 1980 by the State of Israel for his work. His publications include *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity* (1988) and *Jesus* (1997).

The Feeding of the 5,000 could not have taken place, as some English translations suggest, in a "desert place," because the text tells us there were villages nearby. Seeming contradictions such as this in the Gospels can often be explained by digging deeper into the first-century meaning of words. In "The 'Desert' of Bethsaida," p. 16, **Mendel Nun** argues that a

common nuance of the Hebrew and Aramaic words for "desert," as well as familiarity with the vicinity of Bethsaida, provide a solution to this textual conundrum.



Nun, kibbutz member, author and foremost expert on the Sea of Galilee, worked for twenty years as a fisherman on the lake. In 1964 his book *Ancient Jewish Fishing* (in Hebrew) was published, for which he was awarded the Ben-Zvi Prize. His Hebrew monograph on the Sea of Galilee appeared in 1977.

The farming communities of Galilee and the Judean Shephelah were very familiar with the problem of thistles growing in their fields. The broad, basal leaves of these persistent and pernicious plants grow quickly over young grain



seedlings, robbing them of air and sunlight. Were these the "thorns" referred to by Jesus in his Parable of the Sower? In "Enemies of the Harvest," p. 18, **Gloria Suess** narrows the field of approximately two hundred species of thistles in Israel to seven that grow in the fields and terraces of Galilee and the Judean Shephelah foothills.

Living in Israel inspired Suess to start photographing its plants. This is the third in her series of articles on Gospel flora. Her two previous articles were: "Lilies of the Field," *JP* 46 & 47 (Sept.–Dec. 1994), 18–23; and "Beating the (Thorny) Bushes," *JP* 48 (Jul.–Sept. 1995), 16–21.

From time to time one hears of the discovery of ancient scroll fragments containing

original words of Jesus written in Hebrew or Aramaic. To date these rumors have always proved false. Moreover, it is likely that such a discovery is an impossibility, since first-century disciples were strongly prohibited from transmitting the words of a sage in writing. If Jesus' first disciples viewed his teaching as part of the Oral Torah, they would have



transmitted it orally, not in writing, and we should not expect ever to find written Hebrew or Aramaic accounts of Jesus' life. In "The Discomposure of Jesus' Biography," p. 28, **David Bivin** suggests that the first written account of Jesus' life was probably a Greek work.

Bivin is a founding member of the Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research. Arriving in Israel in 1963, he became one of Robert Lindsey's first students in Jerusalem. Bivin was also the student of Hebrew University professors David Flusser, Shmuel Safrai, Menahem Stern and Yechezkel Kutscher.

Published in Jerusalem since 1987, JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE is an independent quarterly magazine reporting on recent discoveries relating to the life and teachings of Jesus. It features the work of Jewish and Christian scholars, particularly the scholars of the Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research. Copyright © 1997 by JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission is prohibited.

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People often ask me, "Who is responsible for JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE's design?" I would like to take the credit, but it belongs to Helen Twena. She is the one who "makes it happen" visually.

Helen received her training in England and Israel, including study at the Bezalel Art Academy in Jerusalem, Israel's most prestigious art school. She has had 18 years of practical experience working for publishing and design companies in London and Jerusalem. For example, prior to immigrating to Israel in 1985, she worked for Hodder & Stoughton, the well-known British publisher.

Helen wants JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE to be reader-friendly. Her magazine design philosophy: Make difficult-to-understand subject matter so inviting that the magazine's readers will be tempted to tackle it.

Helen's first love is designing children's books—JP readers could have guessed that when they saw the lovable cats she drew for the last issue (No. 52, pp. 14-15)—but her artistic skills range from portraiture to magazine illustration. The illustrations Helen does for JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE are not only eye-catching (see No. 48, pp. 10-13), they also help to clarify complicated textual material (see pp. 29-30, 32 in this issue). She is often the first to see the need for an illustration that will make a JP article more meaningful to a non-specialist. In this way she helps scholars better communicate their ideas.

In addition to making life easy for our readers, Helen makes my life as an editor easy. My hat is off.

*David Bivin
Editor*

JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE's Identity

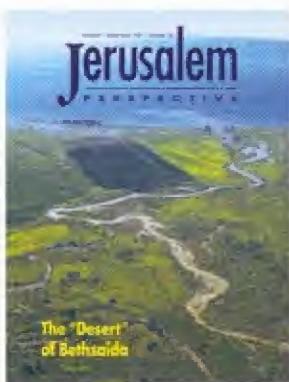
The focus of JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE is Yeshua (ye-SHU-a^t, Jesus) of Nazareth, a first-century A.D. Jewish sage. Therefore, we publish articles that contribute to a better understanding of this unique historical figure. We attempt to present these articles with a maximum of objectivity, and in a way that faithfully communicates their authors' ideas. The magazine is not devotional, and is more textual than theological.

JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE's publisher and editor is a Christian, but to describe the magazine as a Christian publication is inaccurate. We zealously guard the magazine's nonsectarian stance. Its contributors are Christians and Jews, and accordingly, the publication resists being labeled as either Jewish or Christian. We seek to be of service to everyone whose interest is in the life and teachings of Jesus regardless of his or her religious convictions.

Jerusalem

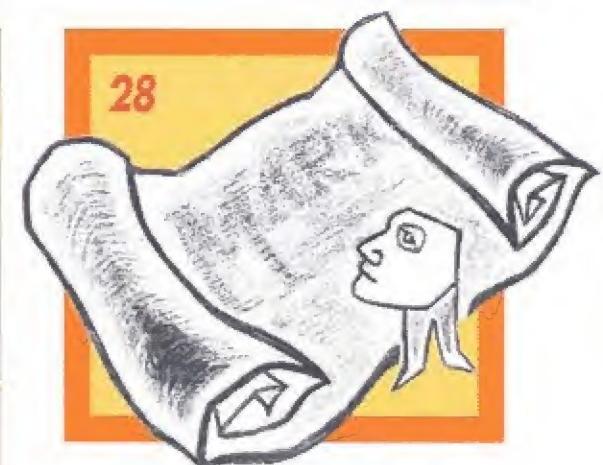
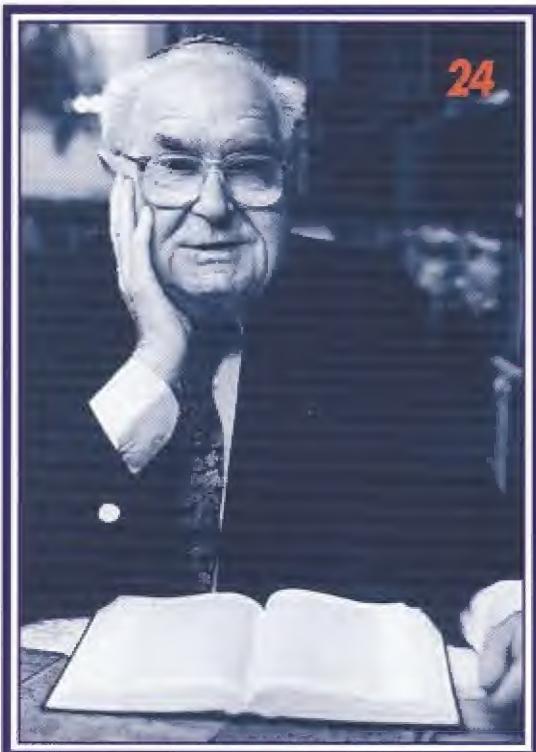
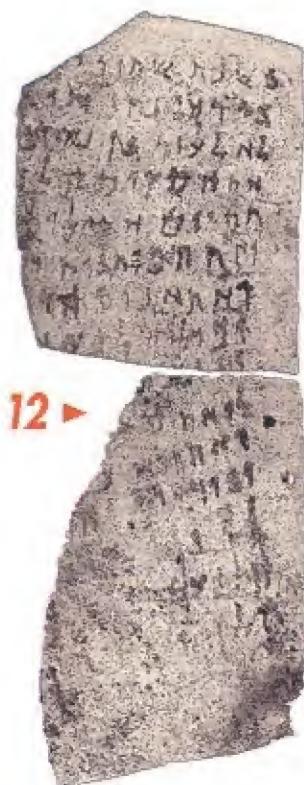
PERSPECTIVE

Exploring the Jewish Background
to the Life and Words of Jesus



COVER: Swollen by heavy rains, the Jordan River winds its way south through the Bethsaida Valley and flows into the Sea of Galilee. A square of recently plowed land displays the fertile, black soil of this "desert." The grove of trees on the lakeshore (below the "J" of "Jerusalem") marks the location of ancient Bethsaida. Photograph by Werner Braun.

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In his recently published book Professor David Flusser, arguably the world’s foremost Jewish authority on Jesus and early Christianity, tells what he has learned about Jesus during a lifetime of study.

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In what language were Jesus’ teachings originally preserved—Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek? In what language were they first written down? These are among the intriguing questions that absorb members of the Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research. There may now be good reason to believe that the first *written* Life of Jesus was a Greek document.

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Readers' Perspective



■ Renew My Subscription!

Please find enclosed renewal of my subscription for JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE. I am very pleased with the standard of the articles and contributions. It encouraged me to rethink some of the attitudes I acquired at college fifty years ago.

Stanley L. Blunden
Canterbury, Kent, England

■ Cancel My Subscription!

We are not anti-Semitic. In fact, we have a soft spot for the Jews. Dr. J. C. Garvey's letter [JP 51, p. 6] draws attention to the flaws in your approach, and there is little left for us to add, except our agreement with Dr. Garvey.

A more important issue rests upon the blood of the sacrifice. Jewish altars were drenched in blood, and the life is in the blood. Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. This is the important issue in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, in accordance with Hebrews 10:12, which one sacrifice tore the veil in the Temple from top to bottom (divinely torn indeed) and finished the Torah Jewish sacrificial system once and for all as it concerned sins and sin.

We are interested in your remarks on page 36: "...the divinely appointed eschatological judge, *to whom Jesus referred as the Son of Man*" [Joseph Frankovic, "Esteeming the Jewish People" (JP 51)]. "Truly blindness hath happened to Israel" (Rom. 11:7-11). Would it not have been much more to the point to have used the "Son of Man" passage in Matthew 24, wherein our Lord answers the specific question in verse 3, "What shall be the sign of Thy coming," in verse 30, which identifies the Lord Jesus with the Son of Man? We think so.

It could hardly be maintained that the Jewish people had returned to Israel because the Lord had gathered them as is promised in Deuteronomy 30:3 since it is evident that the same blindness

afflicts Israel and that they, a few of them, returned in unbelief. Zechariah warns that Israel "shall look on me whom they have pierced" (12:10), which they will do from every nation under heaven to which the Lord God has driven them. Then they shall mourn for *Him*, Christ Jesus their Lord and King (now rejected), every man apart, every family apart. Thereafter they will be willing to be gathered back to the land to fulfill God's word in Deuteronomy 30 and elsewhere. They refused to be gathered at the end of Matthew 23, and their house (no longer God's house) is left unto them desolate, *until* they shall say, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord."

Please don't send any more copies of JP.

William S. Penfold
Stratton Audley, Oxfordshire, England

■ Baptist Pastor's Thinking Revolutionized

Bob Lindsey was my hero back in the dark ages when I was a student at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. All of you have carried on his great spirit, and I appreciate that. I have been an American Baptist, but I wish I could have remained a Southern Baptist and helped carry on Bob's great ideas there. I get frustrated with Baptists in general, and hope that I can be in a Baptist church somewhere someday that is willing to understand "Jewish roots."

I want you to know that everything I read from Jerusalem School scholars continues to revolutionize my thinking about Jesus and Christian faith. I am so grateful to God for all of you. You were a God-send into my life when I was very unhappy with Christian theology. It just no longer made sense to me. That has all changed now. I am still trying to wade through everything Jewish I can get my hands on, read everything Jewish on the Internet, and talk to as many Jews about everything as I can...but there are not many

here. I really hit it off with Rabbi Sol Landau who was the visiting rabbi while the permanent one was on sabbatical, but Sol is gone now. He was a very loving, gracious and scholarly gentleman. Spokane, Washington is a kind of spiritual wasteland in terms of anyone being interested in this "Jewish stuff." But I keep slogging away!

On the other hand, I keep praying that God will give me opportunities to minister in this new way, and I believe eventually He will make that possible. You and the others there in the School are a great inspiration to my life. Thank you! And thanks for the little package of love and grace.

Pastor Garry L. Oliver, Grace Baptist Church
Spokane, Washington, U.S.A.

■ Core of the Christian Faith

In my work in the field of systematic theology, specifically in the context of the Anglican Church at King's College London, I have found my early education in the thought forms of Rabbinic Judaism invaluable for enabling me to see the Jewish nature of the Christian faith. I applaud your efforts to bridge the schism between the Synagogue and the Church in the publication of JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE, however I hope you will not mind me reminding you of the core of the Christian faith residing in the experience of the risen Lord Jesus through the Holy Spirit amongst His elect Saints: the communion of Saints.

There is always the error of seeing Jesus as dead, when in fact He rules today His chosen nation of Jews circumcised in the heart rather than in the flesh. Christians who realise Jesus is risen and is Lord are truly Jews, for they accept the rule and governance of the King of the Jews, Jesus. I am working upon this bridge over this terrible schism that separates us Christians from our brothers of Israel in my present work as a systematic theologian. So I am most glad to see efforts being made such as yours that ultimately tend towards the same goal.

Tarjah J. L. Davey
Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire, England

■ Separating the Wheat from the Tares

These days it is getting increasingly difficult to separate the wheat from the tares. So much of what seems to be going on in the church world appears to lack a strong scriptural foundation. That is why I have always loved the work that you are doing.

People can almost make Scripture say anything they want it to, especially when wrenching it out of its cultural, historical, theological and linguistic background. At some point we must be able to say, "Well, *that* is a nice interpretation, but *this* is the true meaning of the text." Otherwise, how can we know as little lambs in the flock whether or not we are being led down the wrong, and possibly deceptive, path?

What makes matters worse for me, being a messianic charismatic (and by messianic I simply mean that I am Jewish by birth), is that some of the most "powerful" ministries and movements seem to have the most foundationally faulty teachings. How is someone like myself, having not attended a seminary, having not been raised in a denomination (let alone a non-denomination), having not bought into secessionism or ultra-fundamentalism, and having no desire to simply let "experience" (call it "sense-ationalism") be my guide, supposed to know the truth? There is such a thing as truth, isn't there? Wretched man that I am, who shall set me free?

I believe that the ultimate line of demarcation is whether or not we know Him. And to know Him, I believe, starts with knowing the Man as a man in His cultural, historical, theological and linguistic setting. And no matter how you slice that proverbial Snickers bar, you still come up "Hebrew, Hebrew, Hebrew!"

A rootless Church is a fruitless Church. I honestly believe that what you are "promoting" through the work of the Jerusalem School is not "Yippee! Look at what a Jew Jesus was!" but rather "Hallelujah! Look at what a great Teacher we have! Look at what a great Messiah He is! Look at what a loving Father we have!" Then we are left in a place where knowing His teachings (of course, in the fullness of their cultural, historical, theological and linguistic background) can equal knowing the truth, which in turn will set that wretched man free.

As I heard someone on Christian television say recently, "McDonald's builds a new church every day. And they don't take an hour to tell you about the Big Mac. They use a 30-60-second parable to make you hungry for the Big Mac." I'd love to see you run a 60-second ad during a future Super Bowl about the Hebraic background of Jesus and the New Testament, that closes with (I'm being semifacetious with the wording here):

TIRED OF THE SAME OLD JESUS?
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I do believe I'd be making that phone call.

Jeff Niems
Rockwall, Texas, U.S.A.

JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE welcomes letters, faxes and email messages to the Editor. We will use this column to share as many of our readers' comments, queries and requests as possible.

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ISSUE 51 “ANTI-JEWISH TENDENCIES IN THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS”

■ Literary Device or Historical Fact?

I read Dr. Steven Notley's article “Anti-Jewish Tendencies in the Synoptic Gospels” with great interest. However, I would like him to clarify one or two points for me:

1. Dealing with the account of the “Cleansing of the Temple” (p. 26), Notley points out that in Luke's account there is no violence in Jesus' protest, but that Mark broadens Jesus' wrath to include buyers and money-changers, and finally, does not allow anyone to carry anything through the Temple (Lk. 19:45–46; Mk. 11:15–17).

Is Notley saying that where Mark enlarged Luke's simple account Mark was not recording factually what Jesus did, but rather using a literary device to convey his view that the Temple system was finished? In other words, did Jesus in fact overturn the tables of the money-changers?

2. A similar question arises with regard to Pilate and Jesus' trial (p. 29). Did Pilate in fact wash his hands or is this another literary gloss?

In the same section Notley suggests that the phrase “his blood be on us and on our children” was not spoken by the rabble, but was inserted as a transposed curse by a later editor, possibly as a reflection of Acts 5:28.

If not everything in the Gospels is a record of true, factual occurrences, then there are serious questions with regard to the usual Evangelical understanding of “verbal inspiration,” which states that every written word of the original Scriptures was inspired by God; and of “inerrancy,” which means that everything in the Bible was recorded accurately.

Because I am only a novice, I would be glad to have Dr. Notley's confirmation of what he is saying. I am trying to ask questions which may be in the mind of the average Evangelical, but from which you learned men may be a little divorced. Please suffer fools gladly.

The question boils down to this: Do the Gospels together comprise an accurate, factual account of what Jesus said and did, so that although they give us different views of the same facts, they are all equally correct? Or, are they only partly a factual account, thus requiring us to tease out the historical facts from the literary glosses of later editors?

Derek White
Twickenham, Middlesex, England

Steven Notley responds:

When using the Synoptic Gospels as literary sources for historical research, one must pay careful attention to the differences between them. Sometimes these differences can be harmonized through linguistic, cultural or physical considerations, but sometimes not. Luke should not always be preferred to Matthew and Mark, but it often does provide a clearer account of the historical events.

What I find particularly disturbing is when scholarship interprets the sense of Luke's text through the lenses of the Markan account. In the instance of the Cleansing of the Temple, what can certainly be said is that Luke does not preserve any indication of Jesus' use of violence in the “cleansing.” When we consider Mark's version, we find significant additional elements. According to Mark, Jesus would not allow anyone to carry anything through the Temple precincts. New Testament scholars have interpreted the Markan account to suggest that Jesus' action was intended to signal the end of the sacrificial system. No such purpose for Jesus' action can be detected in Luke's narrative. Whether Jesus could or would have resorted to violence to achieve his purposes, or would have attempted to shut down the Temple are questions debated by scholars. Professor Flusser's view is that Jesus expelled the sellers by quoting Scripture.

Regarding the questions of whether Pilate did or did not “wash his hands of the affair” and whether the Jewish leadership pronounced a curse upon themselves and their descendants, significant literary questions challenge the reader. First, there is silence elsewhere in the New Testament on these important historical details. Moreover, an understanding of Pilate's absolution of responsibility is at conflict with even Matthew's own presentation of the events. Note that it is Pilate's soldiers who take Jesus to the cross—not the Jewish leaders.

As you have suggested, there is a need for a thorough reappraisal of our understanding of the nature of Scripture and how we use Scripture in historical inquiry. We need a “workable” understanding of Scripture that allows us to address critical questions while maintaining an orthodox faith.

■ Apostolic Authority and Authorship of New Testament Scriptures

The purpose of my writing is to explain why I feel unable to renew my subscription. However, I would like to say that I appreciate the dedication, the scholarly rigour and many of the insights of your contributors, as well as the quality of JP's presentation.

My concern stems from reading statements such as:

1. "Lindsey...believed that the author of the 'Gospel according to Matthew' was neither the disciple Matthew nor the Matthew to whom Papias referred" (JP 50, p. 8).

2. "The beautiful Greek of Luke's prologue (Lk. 1:1-4), for instance, testifies that the prologue is a later addition to the gospel story" (JP 50, p. 13).

3. "What we witness in Matthew 23 is the kernel of authentic sayings of Jesus. Yet, by reading the Matthean sayings beside their Lukan parallels we can often distinguish between the sayings in their original form and the work of a later Matthean reviser" (JP 51, p. 28).

4. "Matthew alters Jesus' statement slightly but significantly" (JP 51, p. 30).

5. "The reviser of Matthew's gospel...." (JP 51, p. 31).

6. "The gospel of Matthew, on the other hand, possesses a number of anti-Jewish statements that may be the work of a later Gentile scribe" (JP 51, p. 32).

My objection to these statements, and others I could have quoted, will, I suppose, place me amongst those modern Christians whose understanding of the inspiration of Scripture is relatively narrow and rigid. Nevertheless, I believe that in Scriptures such as John 14:26, 16:12-15 and Matthew 18:18-20, Jesus established the principle of apostolic authority—and authorship—of the New Testament Scriptures.

It seems to me that the governing thesis of the Jerusalem School, i.e., that the authentic teachings of Jesus must be "reconstructed" from our existing Gospels, contradicts this principle of apostolic authority. I understand that textual criticism is a necessary and complex procedure, since we do not possess the original apostolic autographs; however, I firmly believe that only by respecting the principles of inspiration laid down in the Scriptures themselves will we arrive at an understanding of the truth.

I would like to appeal to the members of the Jerusalem School to devote your energies to the illumination of the Gospel texts as we have received them, rather than to the pursuit of a Hebrew "Life of Jesus." The former, which I believe to be your area of greatest strength, will bring untold blessing to the community of faith. The latter will, I fear, only lead to disappointment, deception and "quarrels about words" (1 Tim. 6:4).

David Montgomery
Montpellier, France

At JP, we appreciate our readers. They study hard to absorb the material that we produce. Many of them have made important textual discoveries themselves, or through their interaction with us,

have caused us to make new discoveries. I am especially happy when readers present us with constructive criticism. This helps us to rethink our positions and attempt to communicate our ideas more clearly. Real scholars love it when others challenge their positions, or when an editor takes their unpublished articles and book manuscripts and "tears them apart." Constructive criticism is a scholar's life's breath. Therefore, I was delighted to receive Mr. Montgomery's letter. I am only sorry that after submitting such fine constructive criticism, he has chosen to depart from us. —DB

Randall Buth responds:

Mr. Montgomery's letter expresses a valid concern. Perhaps my perspective may help some JP readers to sift and to find what is good.

In general, I study a Gospel text in two directions. First, in common with Lindsey, I want to know whatever I can about the historical origins of the saying and its meaning. That is always open-ended—we cannot know ahead of time where the details will lead—but we can trust God to lead us and take care of us along the way. Second, I want to know the text's canonical meaning. The text has a meaning within a canonical document and I believe that God wants us to work with every and any such text to understand his purposes and his truth: with the document, with the text and with Jesus Christ. (See my "Pursuing Righteousness," JP 32 [May/Jun. 1991], 11-12, 15, and "Inspiration, History and Bible Translation," JP 36 [Jan./Feb. 1992], 3-7, for why such distinctions are necessary.) That is the obligation and benefit that a belief in full (plenary) inspiration gives me. Not every Christian or Jew accepts an inspiration permeating and defined by a canon. I believe that God is also involved in the whole process, including the fixing of the canons.

Now to the points raised in the reader's letter:

1. Lindsey believed that Papias probably referred to the disciple Matthew who wrote a Hebrew biography that formed the basis of Luke's Gospel, one of the sources that Luke mentions. That shouldn't be problematic for any theory of inspiration. At a minimum, it puts apostolic authority behind Luke and any who use Luke.

2. Likewise, the style of Luke's prologue testifies loudly to the care and quality of Luke. It is self-evident that the prologue was written later than any sources Luke used. But the frequent unpolished Greek throughout Luke's Gospel shows an author who respected his sources highly, often transmitted them literally, and refused to transform their humble style into the Greek eloquence of which he was capable.

3. A writer is allowed to summarize, rephrase and regroup words when trying to report three or

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four years of teaching in a document that can be read in two hours.

4. See 3.

5. "Revisers" are always hypothetical and to be taken with a grain of salt. Christians and the Church have rightly accepted the final product as God's Word however many layers might have occurred between the events reported and the final document.

6. The Scriptures cited reflect one possible position on the Bible's view of inspiration. The reader has extended Jesus' statements to situations beyond their context and used them in an exclusive manner ("This way, and no other way") rather than an inclusive one ("Some ways in which the Church will be helped"). Whether the final author of Matthew was a Gentile is technically irrelevant to questions of inspiration. The style of Matthew's author strikes me as from the land of Israel (see my "Matthew's Aramaic Glue," JP 28 [Sept./Oct. 1990], 10-12) and Jewish, and occasional anti-Jewish tones need to be viewed from within the first-century situation. We have records of differing, first-century Jewish groups speaking harshly of those "in error." See, for example, Mishnah, Yadayim 4:7, 8: "The Sadducees say, 'We vehemently object to you, O you Pharisees, because you....' The Pharisees say, 'We vehemently object to you, O you Sadducees, because you....'" What is shameful and must be strongly opposed is the way in which at various times in history the New Testament's seemingly anti-Jewish statements have been misinterpreted and misappropriated by Gentiles, and too often, Christians, in order to

arouse or justify hatred against the Jews. God will hold us responsible (see Gen. 12:2-3).

"Reconstructing original sayings" is a necessary exercise that comes from carefully comparing the different wording in the Gospels of what is often the exact same saying. I believe that God, in his wisdom, has created such a situation for our own good. Our Gospels are living witnesses, not artificial creations of superficial unity.

The last point in Mr. Montgomery's letter is always good to remember: The task of interpretation is never finished until the canonical document is explained and related to the community of believers in an edifying manner. We all are trying to do that with the light God has given us.

A Student of Jesus' Life

It is my understanding that to be a *talmid* (disciple) is to be a student of a rabbi. To be a disciple of Jesus, it follows, is to be a student of his life. I am thrilled at the wealth of information that this ignorant student finds in JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE. I subscribe to both *Biblical Archaeology Review* and *Bible Review*. Both are excellent journals; however, neither have the information so accessible and so clearly written as does JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE. Thank you, thank you, thank you!

Rev. Ben Anderson
First United Methodist Church
Booneville, Arkansas, U.S.A.



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■ Center for Judaic-Christian Studies

The Center for Judaic-Christian Studies, directed by Dwight Pryor, is a non-profit organization that seeks to cultivate among Christians an appreciation of their Hebrew heritage. The Center has produced a 13-part television series, "The Quest: The Jewish Jesus," and published books, such as the award-winning *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible* (Mazar, Doubleday), and the best-selling *Our Father Abraham: Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith* (Wilson, Eerdmans).

■ Centre for the Study of Biblical Research

The Centre for the Study of Biblical Research, directed by Dr. William Bean, was founded in 1984 to augment the work of the Jerusalem School. The Centre's initial focus was to generate funds to purchase computer equipment for the School. CSBR is the publisher of *Fluent Biblical and Modern Hebrew*, a home-study Hebrew course, and acts as JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE's U.S. subscription office. CSBR has established several synoptic gospel study groups that meet monthly in Southern California.

■ Christian Friends of Israel - U.S.A.

Christian Friends of Israel is an international organization based in Jerusalem that seeks to educate Christians about the Jewish roots of their faith and about modern Israel. CFI works to counter anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism embedded in Christian preaching. CFI-USA, directed by Hannele Sorensen, is the U.S. office of Christian Friends of Israel. It publishes a monthly newsletter and digest of current events in

on the New Testament. To learn more about the work of HaKesher, visit its Web site at <http://www.hakesher.org>.

■ CSBR New England

CSBR New England, a branch of the Centre for the Study of Biblical Research, is directed by Jeanne Miterko. Jeanne is a member of the Connecticut Bar Association and practiced law until 1993 when she decided to focus all her attention on her two young sons, ages three and one. Jeanne's



Longtime resident of Israel, Finnish by birth, Hannele Sorensen coordinates the Jerusalem School's work in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Israel and the Middle East, and offers a large selection of Israel-related audio and video cassettes. Learn more about CFI-USA through a visit to its site on the Internet (<http://www.cfi-usa.org>).

■ HaKesher

HaKesher (Hebrew for "the Connection") is directed by Ken and Lenore Mullican. Lenore, the daughter of Jerusalem School pioneer Dr. Robert Lindsey, grew up in Israel and is fluent in Hebrew. HaKesher's principal objectives are to foster awareness of the Jewish roots of the Christian faith, promote teaching of the Hebrew language and culture in the local church as an aid to in-depth Bible study, and serve as a clearinghouse of information for people and organizations interested in a Hebraic perspective

husband, Ron, is an investment portfolio manager for Peoples Bank in Bridgeport, Connecticut.

■ CFI Communications

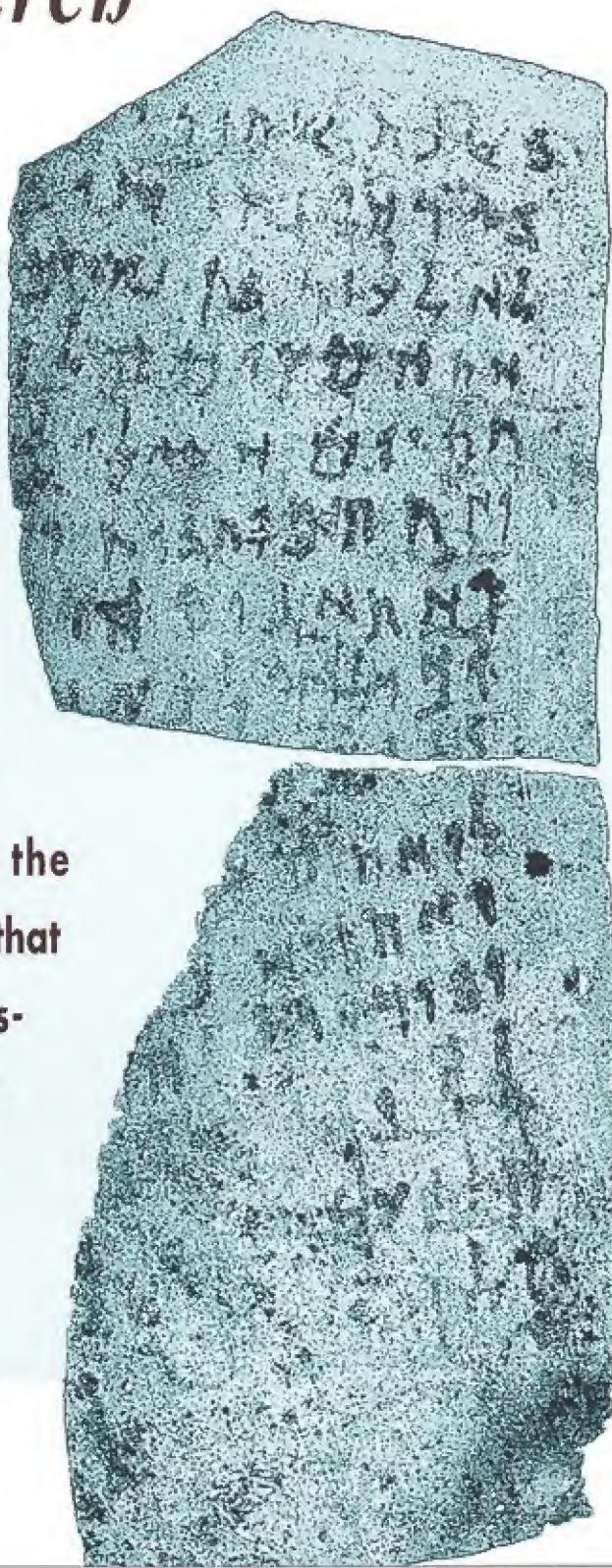
CFI Communications, directed by Derek White, is the U.K. office of Christian Friends of Israel. CFI seeks to express friendship and solidarity with Israel and the Jewish people, and stimulate Christians to pray for Israel. CFI directs much of its energies towards educating Christians about the Jewish roots of their faith and about modern Israel, publishing a bimonthly newsletter and a monthly digest of current events in and around Israel, and producing video and audio cassettes. CFI has also developed a wide range of practical assistance projects in Israel.

Ostracon from Qumran Throws Light on First Church

by David Flusser



Just published, an inscribed potsherd discovered at Qumran provides an amazing parallel to a practice of Jesus' first community of followers. According to the Book of Acts, members of that community sold their possessions and distributed the proceeds according to individual need.



COURTESY OF ESTHER ESHEL

Riches they [the Essenes] despise, and their community of goods is truly admirable; you will not find one among them distinguished by greater opulence than another. They have a law that new members on admission to the sect shall confiscate their property to the order, with the result that you will nowhere see either abject poverty or inordinate wealth; the individual's possessions join the common stock and all, like brothers, enjoy a single patrimony (Josephus, War 2:122–123, Loeb ed.).

The company of the believers were one in heart and soul. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common... There were no needy persons among them, for those who owned pieces of land or houses sold them and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each person according to his needs (Acts 4:32, 34–35).

A potsherd recently unearthed at the Essene settlement of Qumran is of primary importance for understanding the development of the primitive Jerusalem church.¹ The Dutch theologian Hugo Grotius (1583–1645) already noted in his New Testament commentary² the similarity between the New Testament's description of the Jerusalem church's community of wealth (Acts 2:44–45) and Josephus' description of the Essenes' community of wealth (War 2:122–123). In his comments on Acts 2:44, Grotius assembled all the material from ancient authors pertinent to this point. Stories in the book of Acts about Barnabas (4:36–37) and Ananias and Sapphira (5:1–11) are also illuminated by the newly discovered sherd from Qumran.

Cross and Eshel's transcription and English translation of the fifteen legible lines of the ostraca. From Frank Moore Cross and Esther Eshel, "Ostraca from Khirbet Qumrân," Israel Exploration Journal 47 (1997), 18.

Translation

- | | |
|---|------------------------------|
| 1. In year two of the [| בשנת שתים ל.] |
| 2. in Jericho, Ḥōnî son of [...] gave | בירחו נתן חני ב[ן] |
| 3. to 'El'azar son of Nahāmānî [| לאלעזר בן נחמן[ן] |
| 4. Ḥisday from Ḥōlōn[| את חסדי מחולן[ן] |
| 5. from this day to perpetui[ty] | מהיום הזה לע <u>רול</u> [ם] |
| 6. and the boundaries of the house and [| וא <u>חת</u> תחומי הבית ו[ן] |
| 7. and the fig trees, the olive trees, and | והתאנים הז[[נ]יתים |
| 8. when he fulfills (his oath) to the Community [| וכמלותו ליחד[ן] |
| 9. and Ḥōnî [| וחני[ן] |
| 10. to him Ḥis[day (?) | לו את חסֶן[די] |
| 11. and the [| ואת[ה] |
| 12. And by the agency of [| ובכיד[ה] |
| 13. (?) | ל[ן]] |
| 14. Ḥisday servant of Ḥ[ōnî (?) | חסדי עבד ח[ני] |
| 15. Ḥōlōn [| מן] חלון [] |

Influence of Essene Believers

The communal sharing of wealth in the Jerusalem church was historically a new development. Neither John the Baptist nor Jesus demanded of their followers that they turn over private property to the community.³ Their instructions about personal possessions were very different from those of the Essenes. The Essenes practiced economic separatism keeping economic contact with outsiders to a minimum. John the Baptist and Jesus, on the other hand, called for an open approach; they warned their disciples not to isolate themselves from others economically.

John commanded his disciples to share their possessions with others. When people came to him and asked, "What should we do?" (Lk. 3:10), John replied: "He who has two coats, let him share with him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise." The sharing of one's possessions received a different meaning in the context of John's message. It did not mean, as at Qumran, turning over one's property to the group and living a communal life, but rather, sharing one's wealth with the needy. This was a negation of the Essene's economic communism.

Jesus criticized the Essenes for their isolationism and warned his followers against such behavior. He said: "The sons of this world are cleverer in their dealings with each other than the 'sons of light' [a reference to the Essenes]. I tell you, make friends for yourselves from the wealth of unrighteousness [i.e., the wealth of outsiders] " (Lk. 16:8–9). In Jesus' opinion, the sons of this world were wiser than the Essenes because they maintained economic contact with others.

The communal sharing of wealth, then, was not an idea that entered the primitive church under the influence of John or Jesus' teaching, but we may suppose that it developed due to the influence of Essenes who joined the new movement.

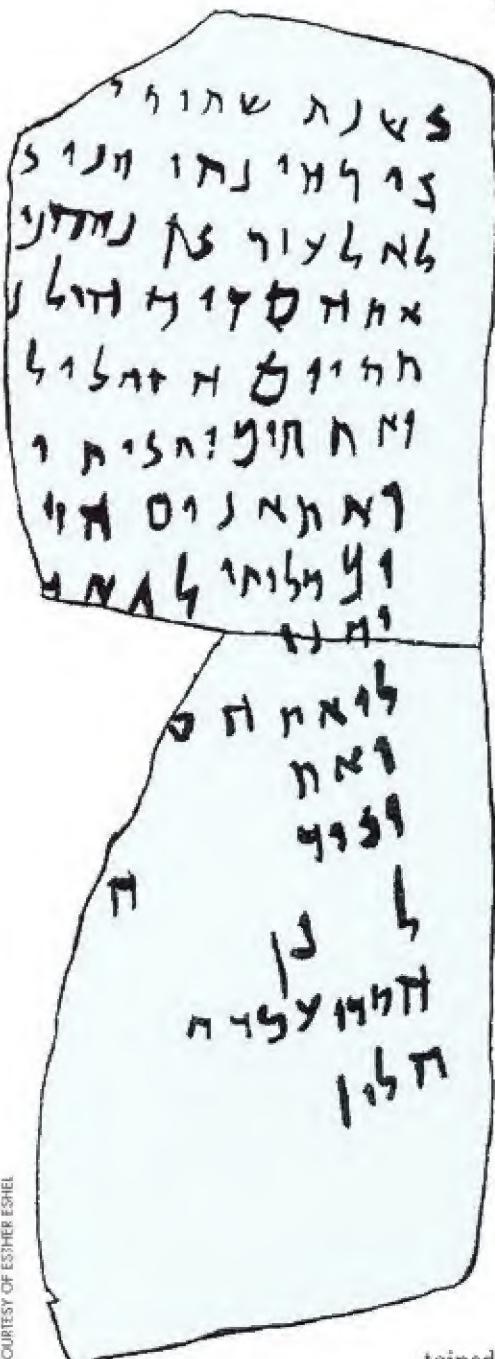
The Dead Sea Scrolls confirm what we already knew from Josephus (*War* 2:122), that when a man became a full member of the sect he had to turn over his property to the order. According to the Essenes' Manual of Discipline (1QS 6:14–23), during a novice's first two years his property was not merged with the property of the community. After completing the first year of his novitiate,⁴ the novice's property and earnings were handed over to the Bursar of the Community;⁵ however, it was still kept separate from the property of the community. Only after the novice had completed the second year of his probation⁶ was he accepted as a full member and his property merged with the property of the sect.⁷

Honi, Hisday and the Bursar

The ostraca from Qumran was written in Jericho and contains a declaration by a certain Honi that he grants to the sect (the *Yahad*) as a gift "from this day to perpetuity" his estates in Holon,⁸ which included a house, fig trees, olive trees and a slave named Hisday. The recipient of Honi's property is a certain Eleazar the son of Nahamani, probably the Bursar of the Community at Qumran.⁹ The ostraca, therefore, appears to be nothing less than the deed of a gift from an Essene novice at the end of the first year of his novitiate (see Manual of Discipline 6:18–21). It was at the end of this first year that the novice's property was handed over to the Bursar of the Community.

Honi's property would have been fully incorporated into the community's property only at the end of his second year of probation. This is hinted at in line 8 of the ostraca. The two words of this line should be translated: "And when he has completed [his first year as a novice] of the community...."¹⁰ The rest of the ostraca is very fragmentary; however, it seems that the ostraca contains the declaration of Honi that he deeds his possessions, namely, his house, its surroundings and his slave to the Essene community at Qumran. At the end of Honi's second year as a novice and his acceptance as a full member of the sect, Honi's property would have been sold and the proceeds of the sale merged with the community's wealth; I cannot imagine that the Essenes held land outside their site, and within the Qumran community slavery was forbidden.¹¹

A drawing of the ostracon. From Frank Moore Cross and Esther Eshel, "Ostracon from Khirbet Qumrân," Israel Exploration Journal 47 (1997), 19.



COURTESY OF ESTHER ESHEL

Significance of New Discovery

The scrolls from Qumran, and now, the newly unearthed ostracon, are able to clarify what one reads in Acts 2–5. The believers “had everything in common, and selling their properties and possessions, they distributed them to all according to each individual’s needs” (Acts 2:44–45). A central figure in the Jerusalem community was a Levite from Cyprus named Joseph, whom the apostles nicknamed Barnabas.

This was the same Barnabas who later became Paul’s traveling companion. Barnabas “sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles’ feet” (Acts 4:37).

It was common in the early church of Jerusalem that “those who owned pieces of land or houses sold them and brought the money and put it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to each person according to his needs” (Acts 4:34–35). In Acts 5:1–10 a tragic story is related: Ananias and his wife Sapphira died because they pretended to donate to the community the full amount of a piece of land’s sale price.

The Jerusalem church’s economic situation is thus similar to what is described in the Manual of Discipline 6:17–23, and especially in the text of the ostracon. This is immensely significant for the historicity of Acts and the Gospel of Luke, the first part of the book (Luke–Acts) that Luke wrote. It is plausible that when Barnabas and Ananias and Sapphira donated their gifts to the Jerusalem community they had to sign a legal document similar to Honi’s gift deed recently discovered at Qumran. **JP**

A photograph of the ostracon (broken into two pieces). Weathering has made the writing barely readable. From Frank Moore Cross and Esther Eshel, “Ostraca from Khirbet Qumrān,” *Israel Exploration Journal* 47 (1997), 19.



COURTESY OF ESTHER ESHEL

1. The ostracon was discovered in the winter of 1996 by an archaeological expedition directed by Prof. James F. Strange excavating at the Essene community center at Qumran, at the base of the outside face of the center’s eastern perimeter wall. Prof. Strange assigned publication of the inscription to Frank Moore Cross of Harvard University and Esther Eshel of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Cross and Eshel published the inscription in Frank Moore Cross and Esther Eshel, “Ostraca from Khirbet Qumrān,” *Israel Exploration Journal* 47 (1997), 17–28. According to the authors, the script of the ostracon is Late Herodian (20–68 C.E.).

2. *Annotationes on the New Testament*, published in three volumes between 1641 and 1650.

3. See David Flusser, “Jesus’ Opinion about the Essenes,” *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1988), pp. 150–168.

4. 1QS 6:18: וְכִלֵּאָת לֹא שָׁמַע בְּצַדְקָה הַזָּה (and when he has completed a year in the *Yahad*...).

5. 1QS 6:19–20: אֶל יְהָסֵט הַמְבָקֵר נֶל מְלָאכָה הַרְבִּים ([His wealth shall be turned over] to the Bursar of the Community).

6. 1QS 6:20–21: שֶׁד פִּילָּאָת לֹא שָׁמַע בְּצַדְקָה אֲשֶׁר הַזָּה (prior to his completion of a second year among the men of the *Yahad*); וְכִלֵּאָת לֹא שָׁמַע הַזָּה (and when he has completed the second year).

7. 1QS 6:21–23.

8. For a discussion of the topographical problems related to the identification of Holon, see Cross and Eshel, “Ostraca from Khirbet Qumrān,” 22, note 23.

9. See above, note 5.

10. וְכִלֵּאָת לֹא: This corresponds to the beginning of 1QS 6:18 (see above, note 4)! The same verb occurs no less than three times in this passage (lines 17, 18, 21).

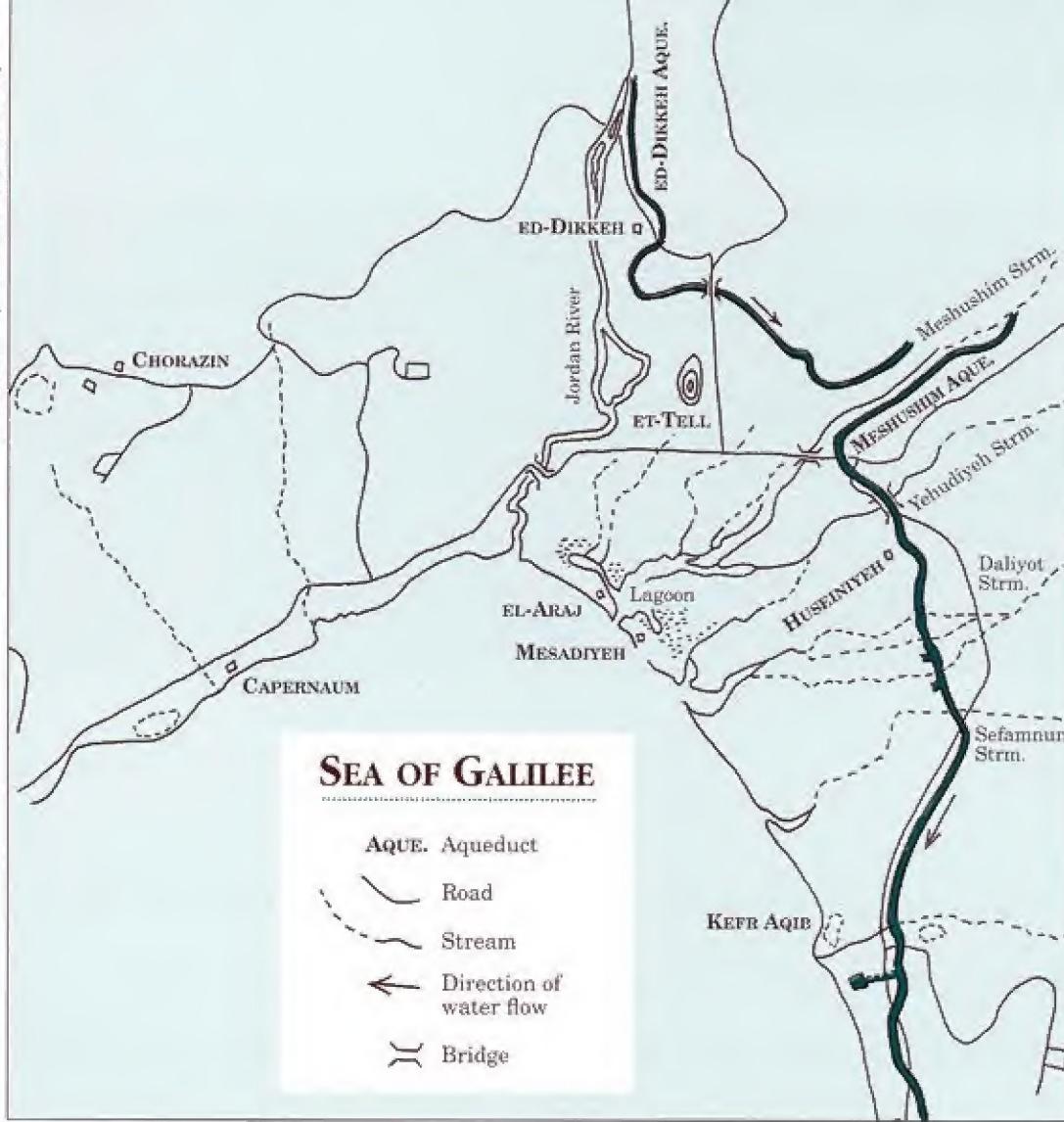
11. Hisday of Holon was surely a non-Jewish slave.

THE "DESERT" OF BETHSAIDA

by Mendel Nun

The Feeding of the Five Thousand could not have taken place, as some English translations suggest, in a "desert place" because the text tells us there were villages nearby. By analyzing the meaning of the word translated "desert," the topography at the scene of this miracle can be clarified.





Left:
Map of the Bethsaida Valley showing its streams and aqueducts.

Page 16:
The author stands in the enormous ed-Dikkeh Aqueduct, a Roman aqueduct that carried Jordan River water south to the fields of the Bethsaida Valley. The valuable aqueduct was repaired and replastered by local farmers century after century until 1948 when the area came under Israeli sovereignty.

The miracle of the Feeding of the Five Thousand as described in the gospels (Mt. 14:13–21; Mk. 6:30–44; Lk. 9:10–17; Jn. 6:1–13) raises an interesting question regarding the location of the miracle. Mark and Matthew both refer to it as a “desert place,” but also note that it was green. John does not mention a “desert place,” stating instead that there was “much grass in the place.” In Luke we are told that Jesus went into “a desert place belonging to Bethsaida.”

4.63 sq. mi.) but fertile plain or valley, the Valley of Bethsaida. This valley is crisscrossed by streams, aqueducts and irrigation canals. The area is not at all what we think of as a “desert.”

Furthermore, the place was hardly a “desert” if the disciples wanted to send the crowds to buy bread in the nearby villages. “Villages” would seem to indicate a settled area. These textual difficulties call for some explanation. In my opinion, one may be found in the problems of translation.

Fertile Bethsaida

The idea of a “desert place” near Bethsaida seems strange. Bethsaida (modern el-Araj) was a first-century fishing village on the northeastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. The village was located in a small (approx. 12 sq. km. or

Double Meaning

It is widely believed that the earliest gospel or gospels were written in Hebrew or Aramaic. The Hebrew equivalent of “desert of Bethsaida” would be *midbar Bethsaida*. The renowned

(continued on page 37)

E NEMIES OF

In the famous Parable of the Sower, Jesus referred to seed sown in soil that was full of thistles (Mt. 13:7; Mk. 4:7; Lk. 8:7). What did these thistles look like, and how did they succeed in choking the grain plants?

Right:
Common Thistle. Yellow blossoms surrounded by white-edged, thorny leaves.

Page 19:
Milk Thistle. Flower head with usual pinkish-purple color.



Article and photographs by Gloria E.M. Suess

THE HARVEST



A view of the fields and hillside terraces in Israel on a hot summer day could reveal two prevalent residents: stones and thistles. An old Jewish fable apprises that ninety percent of the world's stone was dropped on Israel during creation. A close competitor to that ninety percent of stone is the percent of thorny plants. Some sources claim there are approximately two hundred species of such plants in Israel. Surely there are many more than that!



Milk Thistle. Young rosette in early winter. Grasses underneath will soon be smothered by the thistle's growing leaves.

Stones and Thistles

How appropriate it is that stones and thorny plants are mentioned so often in the Scriptures! How appropriate it is that Jesus mentions them in his parable teaching! In the Parable of the Sower—or of the “Good Soil,” or of the “Seeds”—he includes both stone and thistles. Together with birds, they are enemies of the harvest.

As part of a series on Gospel flora, this article concentrates on the thistle. Yes, *thistles*! Most translations insist on using the word “thorns” for the Greek ὄκανθα (*akantha*) found in Gospel passages. As mentioned in an earlier article in this series—“Beating the (Thorny) Bushes,” *JP* 48 (Jul.–Sept. 1995), 16, 18—both Greek and English translators of the Scriptures have had a great deal of trouble in identifying thorny plants of Israel. There are at

least twenty Hebrew words in the Hebrew Scriptures that refer to thorny plants.

Parable of the Sower

In the Parable of the Sower, the word “thistles” seems to fit best. It is gratifying to see that some translators agree. *The Good News According to Matthew* (H. Einspruch), *The Four Gospels* (E. V. Rieu) and *The New English Bible* are a few translations that read “thistles.” Rieu’s rendering of Luke 8:7 is especially noteworthy: “Other seed fell in among the thistles, which came up at the same time and smothered it.”

Grain is sown in Israel around the time of *Sukkot* (Tabernacles) when the early rains are expected. It sprouts in the rainy winter and grows through spring. Barley ripens first and is harvested at *Pesah* (Passover). Wheat matures in summer and is harvested around the time of *Shavuot* (Pentecost).

Thistles have a similar growing season. In early winter, annual species sprout from seeds dispersed in the past summer, and perennials spring up anew from roots remaining in the ground after the upper growth has dried in the fall and been broken down by the early winter rains. As any gardener knows, robust weeds grow more quickly than cultivated seed. The thistles start with a rosette of leaves close to the ground. These lower leaves grow large and broad. Anything beneath them is deprived of air and sunlight in the smothering darkness. So it is with grain sown among thistle seeds and roots. And so it is with the word of God when overgrown by the cares, riches and pleasures of life, as Jesus explains his parable in Luke 8:14.

The Curse of Thistles

No doubt Second Temple-period farmers knew well the problem of thistles, the curse in Genesis 3:18. It was a constant battle. The farmers’ simple plows only encouraged the widely dispersed seeds and failed to dig up the tenacious roots. Late summer burning of the dry thistles was just that—too late. Fields left to lie fallow can be taken over by thistles in a year or two.

However, thistles are not totally undesirable. They do make effective, though temporary, fences. And they are edible; the artichoke is a cultivated relative. Thistle stalks can be peeled and eaten like celery. Young leaves of the thistle rosettes still are used in salads and as pot herbs in the Middle East. They are thought to have been the “bitter herbs” of Passover, as by



then the leaves have lost their mild taste and tenderness. But a loaf of hot, crusty bread is much preferred to a pot of bitter herbs. Who would be inclined to pray, "Give us this day our daily thistle!"

Thistles are a member of the Composite (*Compositae*) family, one of the largest families of plants. From the more than 1,000 species of thistles on earth, the field can be narrowed quickly to the 125 claimed to grow in Israel. Those may be limited to the ones known for their propensity to grow in the fields and terraces of Galilee and the Judean Shephelah foothills. These were major grain-growing areas of Jesus' ministry. The following species are some of the most common and represent seven distinct genera.

Milk Thistle, *Silybum marianum*, גדי־LAN (ge-di-LAN ma-TSUI). This outspreading plant reaches from four to seven feet in height. Its stalks are the first to rise from the rosette in early spring and soon are topped by large purple or white flower heads. The broad, dark-green leaves are marked by white blotches. These are accounted for by a fable that some of Mary's milk dropped on its leaves as she nursed the infant Jesus during their trip to Egypt. In turn, this gave rise to the plant's alternate names: Holy Milk Thistle and Mary's Thistle. Edible when young and used medicinally, this annual is a candidate for the "bitter herbs" eaten with the Passover lamb and unleavened bread (Exod. 12:8; Num. 9:11).

Common Thistle, *Scolymus maculatus*, HO-ah-a-KOD. As happens to very common plants, this thistle has several common names: Golden Thistle, Spotted Golden Thistle and White Thorn. The rosette sprouts a thick, thorn-ridged stalk as much as six feet

tall. Short branches bear at their ends bright yellow flowers surrounded by thorny leaves. The deep-green leaves have distinctive white edges and veins. This annual dries to a ghostly grayish white in the fall. Michael Zohary (*Plants of the Bible*, p. 160) suggests this species is the "thorn" of the Parable of the Sower.

Syrian Thistle, *Notobasis syriaca*, בָּר־קָנָה (bar-KAN su-RI). The Syrian Thistle sends up its stalk as early as the Milk Thistle, but is much shorter, generally about three feet in height. Its spiny, broad, basal leaves are also mottled white. An annual, its clusters of small, pink flowers develop seeds with long, white hairs for dispersal.

Iberian Centaury, *Centaurea iberica*, דָּר־דָּרָם (dar-DAR ma-TSUI). Sources claim from 24 to 48 species of *Centaurea* in Israel. The confusion is understandable as many species are similar and some have flowers of different colors—white, yellow, pink and purple—from plant to plant within the same species. *Centaurea iberica* is one of the latter. Only the flowering heads bear thorns—long, yellow ones. The leaves are small, soft and sparse. The plant is low and bushy. This biennial starts in the early spring with a rosette of edible leaves.

Globe Thistle, *Echinops adenocaulus*, קִפְּוֹן־דָּן (ki-po-DAN ma-TSUI). This particular species of Globe Thistle grows mainly in northern Israel. A perennial, the rosette sprouts in winter and

Above left:
Common Thistle. Thick, spiny, grayish-white stalks in early winter along a roadway at Neot Kedumim.

Below:
Tumble Thistle. Flowering plant on the Gamla nature preserve in the Golan.



Right:
Iberian Centaury. Flower
head surrounded by spiny
thorns.

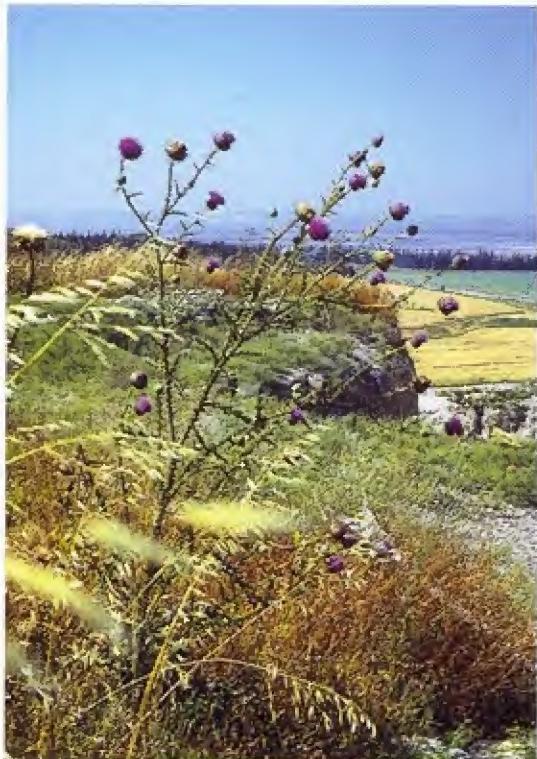
Below left:
Globe Thistle. Florets
open first at top, then
downwards.

Below right:
Syrian Thistle. Flowering
stalk rising from a mature
rosette with spreading,
broad leaves.



grows to a shrubby size. In summer, flower stalks rise up three to five feet. The spectacular, purplish-blue flower heads are as much as five inches in diameter. In fall, they disperse small, spiny seeds.

Cotton Thistle, *Onopordum cynarocephalum*, כַּרְכָּמֵשׁ הַקִּינֶּרֶת (*ho-HAN ha-kin-RES*). *Onopordum acanthium*, Scottish Thistle, has

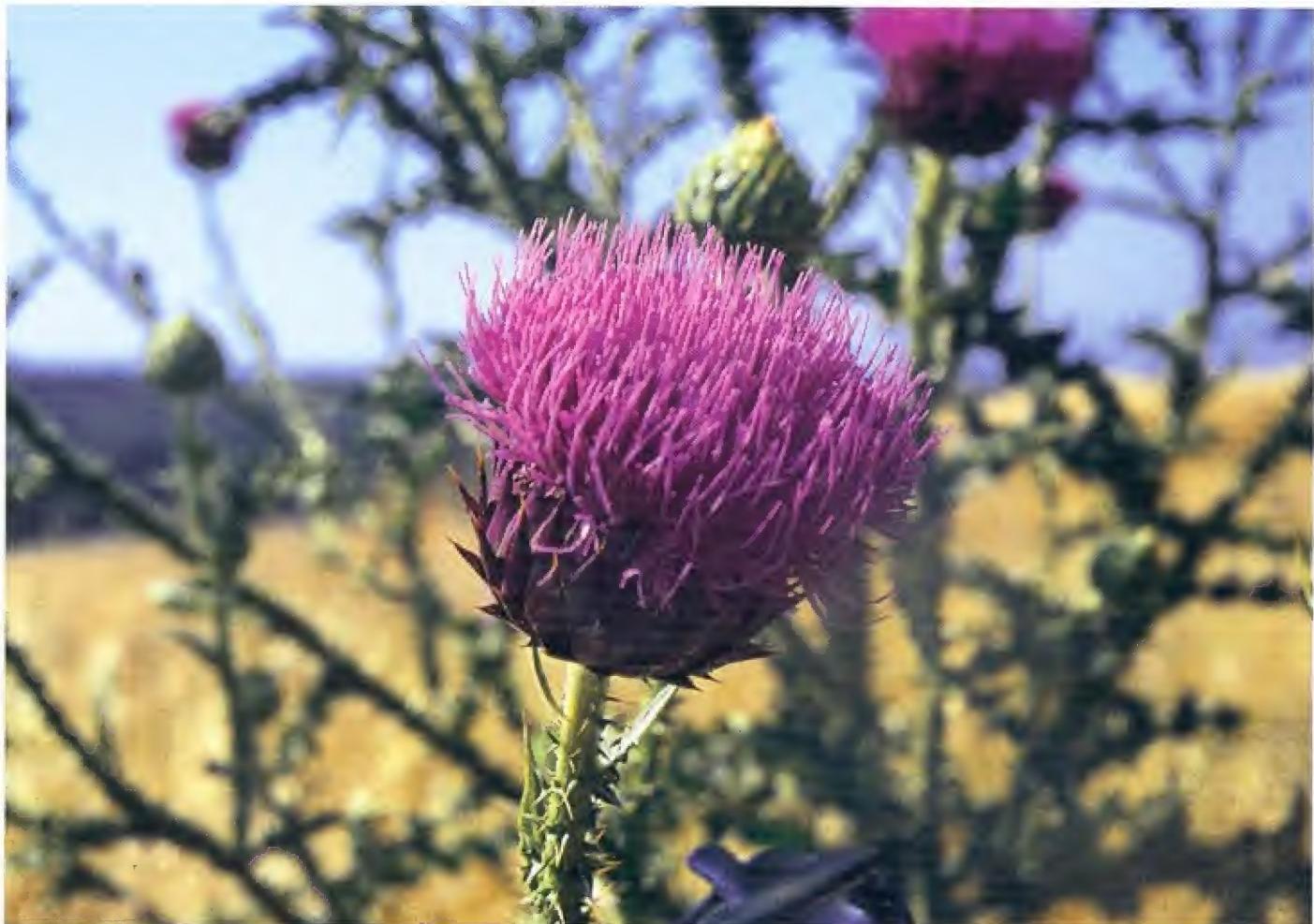


been described as the most impressive thistle of all, but its relative, *Onopordum cynarocephalum*, rises taller, sometimes over six feet. The Cotton Thistle has a central stalk that branches into many stems, all bristling with short, fine thorns. Its purplish-red blossoms are well over two inches wide, the general size of the Scottish. This perennial is found along the coastal as well as central areas of Israel.

Tumble Thistle, *Gundelia tournefortii*, נַלְגָה עֲמֹרֶת הַגָּל (*a-ku-VIT ha-gal-GAL*). This thistle species is quite distinct from those above. It is a low, bushy plant with large, spiny, thick-veined leaves. When broken, the yellow veins exude a milky sap. The flower head is a stemless dome of stiff, brown bracts with yellow florets. In late summer, the dry plant, a perennial, breaks from the root and shrivels into a ball shape. Like a tumbleweed, it rolls with the wind and scatters its many seeds. This feature has given it the alternate name of Whirling Thistle. The Hebrew name, נַלְגָה (*gal-GAL*), means "a wheel." It is found in Isaiah 17:13, translated "rolling thing" (KJV), and some believe this refers to the Tumble Thistle. **JP**

Above left:
Cotton Thistle. Plant towering over six feet on the Megiddo tell.

Below:
Cotton Thistle. Large flower heads on thin, thorny stalks.



E XCERPTS FROM DAVID FLUSSER'S J · E · S · U · S

David Flusser, *JESUS*. Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1997. Hardcover, 297 pages.

At 80, one of the world's foremost Jewish authorities on the New Testament and early Christianity, Jerusalem School member David Flusser, has written a biography of Jesus. In his book Flusser, Professor Emeritus at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, tells what he has learned in a lifetime of studying the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth.

The new book is especially significant because Flusser follows the synoptic theory of the late Robert Lindsey. Together, Flusser and Lindsey laid the foundations for a school of New Testament research, today known as the Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research. In the first chapter of the book (p. 22), Flusser states his intention to "apply the methods of literary criticism and Lindsey's [synoptic] solution to unlock these ancient sources [i.e., Matthew, Mark and Luke]."

JESUS was written by Prof. Flusser in collaboration with his student, Dr. R. Steven Notley. Notley is director of the Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research and head of Jerusalem University College's New Testament Department.



I grew up in the strongly Catholic, Bohemian town of Příbram. The town was one of the great centers of pilgrimage in Central Europe. Because of the humane atmosphere in Czechoslovakia at that time, I did not experience any sort of Christian aversion to my Jewish background. In particular, I never heard any accusation of deicide directed against my people. As a student at the University of Prague, I became acquainted with Josef Perl, a pastor and member of the Unity of Bohemian Brethren, and I spent many evenings conversing with him at the local YMCA in Prague. The strong emphasis which this pastor and his fellow brethren placed on the teaching of Jesus and on the early, believing community in Jerusalem stirred in me a healthy, positive interest in Jesus, and influenced the very understanding of my own Jewish faith as well.

Interacting with these Bohemian Brethren played a decisive role in the cultivation of my scholarly interests; their influence was one of the foremost reasons that I decided to occupy myself with the person and message of Jesus.

Later in life I became interested in the history of the Bohemian Brethren, and I discovered links

between this group and other similar movements in the past and present. I have since had the honor to become acquainted with members of one such movement having spiritual links to the Bohemian Brethren—the Mennonites in Canada and the United States. When my German book on Jesus was first published, a leading Mennonite asked me if the book were Christian or Jewish. I replied, "If the Christians would be Mennonites, then my work would be a Christian book." What I have set out to do here is to illuminate and interpret, at least in part, Jesus' person and opinions within the framework of his time and people. My ambition is simply to serve as a mouthpiece for Jesus' message today. (*From the Preface*, p. 17)

The germ of revolution in Jesus' preaching does not emerge from a criticism of Jewish law, but from other premises altogether. These premises did not originate with Jesus. To the contrary, his critical assault stemmed from attitudes already established before his time. Revolution broke through at three points: the radical interpretation of the commandment of mutual love, the call for a new morality, and the idea of the kingdom of heaven....

Luke 6:36 is a parallel to Matthew 5:48: "You must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." The best way of translating this saying is, "There must be no limit to your goodness, as your heavenly Father's goodness knows no bounds" (*New English Bible*). Matthew 5:48 is merely the conclusion to a short homily where Jesus teaches that God reaches out in love to *all* people, regardless of their attitude and behavior toward Him, "for He makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust." In this Jesus is not far from the humane attitude of other Jews. R. Abbahu said, "Greater is the day of rainfall than the day of resurrection. For the latter benefits only the pious, whereas the former benefits pious and sinners alike" (B. Ta'anit 7a). R. Abbahu lived about 300 A.D., but there is a similar saying dating from Jesus' time. Thus, it is no wonder that in such a spiritual atmosphere Jesus drew his daring conclusion: "Love your enemies!" (Matt. 5:44). In other words, "Return love to those who hate you" or: "Do good to those who hate you" (Luke 6:27)....

A man's relationship to his neighbor ought, therefore, to be determined by the fact that he is one with him both in his good and in his evil characteristics. This is not far from Jesus' commandment to love, but Jesus went further and broke the last fetters still restricting the ancient Jewish

commandment to love one's neighbor. We have already seen that Rabbi Hanina believed that one ought to love the righteous and not hate the sinner. Jesus said, "I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matt. 5:44). It is true that in those days semi-Essene



JANET FRANKOWIC

circles had reached similar conclusions from different presuppositions, and Jesus' moral teaching was influenced by these circles. Yet, influences do not explain everything. (*From Chpt. 5: "Love," pp. 81, 83, 88*)

On one occasion someone brought the news to Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate mixed with their sacrifices.... It was then, more or less, a general opinion that calamity—and illness—was a punishment for sin. It could be argued, therefore, that these men were greater sinners than other Galileans. Jesus did not reject this general opinion, but at the same time he rejected the current application of this view as simplistic. Instead of the vulgar ethics, he called to Israel, "Repent or perish!" He illustrated his call for a national repentance by the following parable of the barren fig tree (Luke 13:6–9). Later on, being in Jerusalem he saw the imminent catastrophe as almost inevitable (Luke 19:40–41). The future destruction of Jerusalem could have been avoided, if it had chosen the way of peace and repentance.

Jesus' concept of the righteousness of God, therefore, is incommensurable with reason. Man

Above:
Dr. Steven Notley and Prof. David Flusser exchange ideas during a meeting of the Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research (Sept. 29, 1994).

Page 24:
David Flusser and his brother Yosef in Purim costumes (about 1928) in their childhood home in Příbram, Czechoslovakia. David is dressed as a chimney sweep and his brother as a baker.

cannot measure it, but he can grasp it. It leads to the preaching of the kingdom in which the last will be first, and the first last. It leads also from the Sermon on the Mount to Golgotha where the just man dies a criminal's death. It is at once profoundly moral, and yet beyond good and evil. In this paradoxical scheme, all the "important," customary virtues, and the well-knit personality, worldly dignity, and the proud insistence upon the formal fulfillment of the law, are fragmentary and empty. Socrates questioned the intellectual side of man. Jesus questioned the moral. Both were executed. Can this be mere chance? (*From Chpt. 6: "Ethics,"* p. 102)

For Jesus and the rabbis, the kingdom of God is both present and future, but their perspectives are different. When Jesus was asked when the kingdom was to come, he said, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, 'Lo, here it is!' or 'There!' For behold,

who break through, seize it" (Matt. 11:12). According to Luke 16:16, "every one forces his way in." Jesus' words are based upon Micah 2:13.

This, then, is the "realized eschatology" of Jesus. He is the only Jew of ancient times known to us who preached not only that people were on the threshold of the end of time, but that the new age of salvation had already begun...for Jesus, the kingdom of heaven is not only the eschatological rule of God that has dawned already, but a divinely willed movement that spreads among people throughout the earth. The kingdom of heaven is not simply a matter of God's kingship, but also the domain of his rule, an expanding realm embracing ever more and more people, a realm into which one may enter and find one's inheritance, a realm where there are both great and small. That is why Jesus called the twelve to be *fishers of men* (Matt. 4:19) and to heal and preach everywhere. "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 10:5–16). For this reason he demanded of some that they should leave everything behind and follow him. We do not mean to assert that Jesus wanted to found a church or even a single community, but that he wanted to start a movement. Stated in exaggerated ecclesiological terms, we might say that the eruption of the kingdom of heaven is a process in which ultimately the invisible Church becomes identical with the visible.

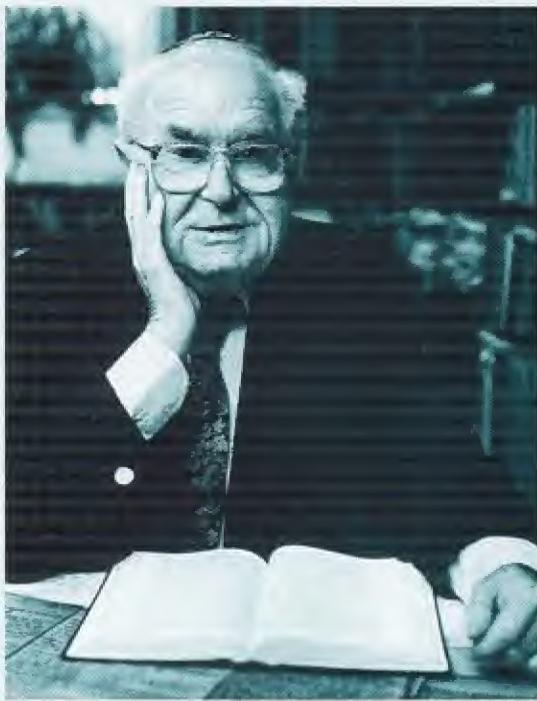
That which Jesus recognized and desired is fulfilled in the message of the kingdom. There God's unconditional love for all becomes visible, and the barriers between sinner and righteous are shattered. Human dignity becomes null and void, the last become first, and the first become last.

The poor, the hungry, the meek, the mourners, and the persecuted inherit the kingdom of heaven. In Jesus' message of the kingdom, the strictly social factor does not, however, seem to be the decisive thing. His revolution has to do chiefly with the transvaluation of all the usual moral values, and hence his promise is specially for sinners. "Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you" (Matt. 21:31–32). Jesus found resonance among the social outcasts and the despised, just as John the Baptist had done before him.

Even the non-eschatological ethical teaching



the kingdom of God is in the midst of you" (Luke 17:20–21). Elsewhere he said, "But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Luke 11:20). There are, therefore, according to Jesus, individuals who are already in the kingdom of heaven. This is not exactly the same sense in which the rabbis understood the kingdom. For them the kingdom had been always an unchanging reality, but for Jesus there was a specific point in time when the kingdom began breaking out upon earth. "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven is breaking through, and those



indifference, and ought not to be strengthened by opposition. Therefore, one should not resist evildoers; one should love one's enemy and not provoke the Roman empire to attack. For when the kingdom of God is fully realized, all this will vanish. (*From Chpt. 7: "The Kingdom of Heaven," pp. 110-112*)

I am convinced that there are reliable reports that the Crucified One "appeared to Peter, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time... Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles." Last of all, he appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus (1 Cor. 15:3-8). When Jesus answered the high priest's question about his Messiahship with the words, "From now on the Son of man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God," did he believe that he, too, would escape the fate that threatened him. Or, as it more likely, did he believe that he would rise from the dead? In any event, the high priest correctly understood that by Jesus' words he was confessing that he was the Messiah. Therefore Caiaphas said, "What need have we of further witnesses? You have heard it from his own mouth" (Luke 22:71). Jesus was taken straightway to Pilate. (*From Chpt. 11: "Death," pp. 154-155*)

JP

Left:
Professor Emeritus
David Flusser (Jul. 16,
1989).

Page 26:
Colleagues Prof. David
Flusser and Dr. Robert
Lindsey enjoy a light
moment as they work
together in Flusser's
study (Aug. 1974).

of Jesus can presumably be oriented towards his message of the kingdom. Because Satan and his powers will be overthrown and the present world-order shattered, it is to be regarded almost with

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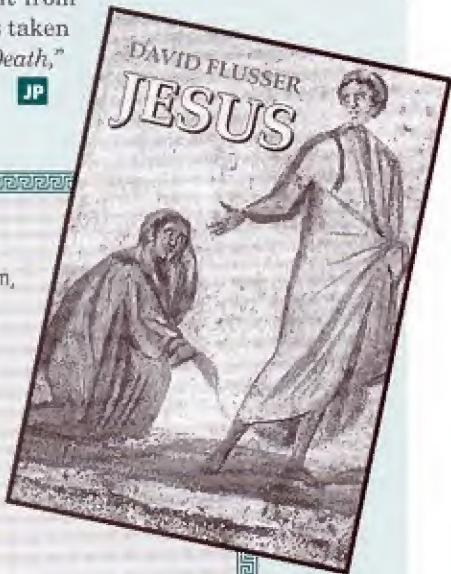
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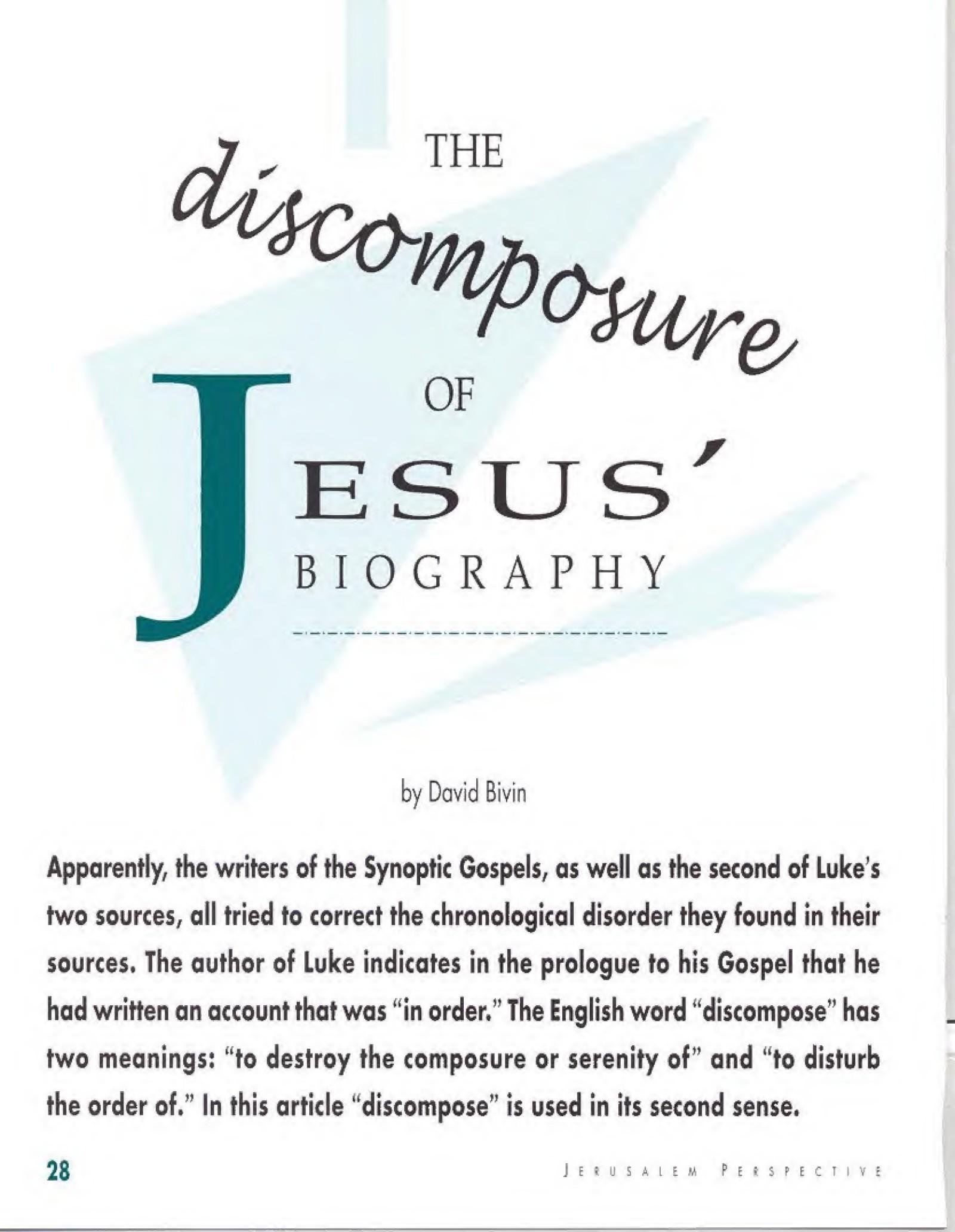
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THE *discomposure* OF JESUS' BIOGRAPHY

by David Bivin

Apparently, the writers of the Synoptic Gospels, as well as the second of Luke's two sources, all tried to correct the chronological disorder they found in their sources. The author of Luke indicates in the prologue to his Gospel that he had written an account that was "in order." The English word "discompose" has two meanings: "to destroy the composure or serenity of" and "to disturb the order of." In this article "discompose" is used in its second sense.

Shmuel Safrai has remarked that just as one should not expect to find first-century copies of Pharisaic writings, one should not expect to find fragments of a Hebrew biography of Jesus.¹ Prof. Safrai's assumption that no Hebrew *Life of Jesus* will turn up results from his knowledge that in this period the disciple of a Pharisaic sage was not permitted to transmit in writing the words of his master.² A sage's teaching was considered Oral Torah and as such its transmission in writing was strongly prohibited.³ If, as seems likely, Jesus' first disciples viewed his words as part of that growing corpus of scriptural interpretation known as Oral Torah, then they, too, would not have dared preserve his teaching in writing, but would have transmitted it orally.⁴

First Written Account

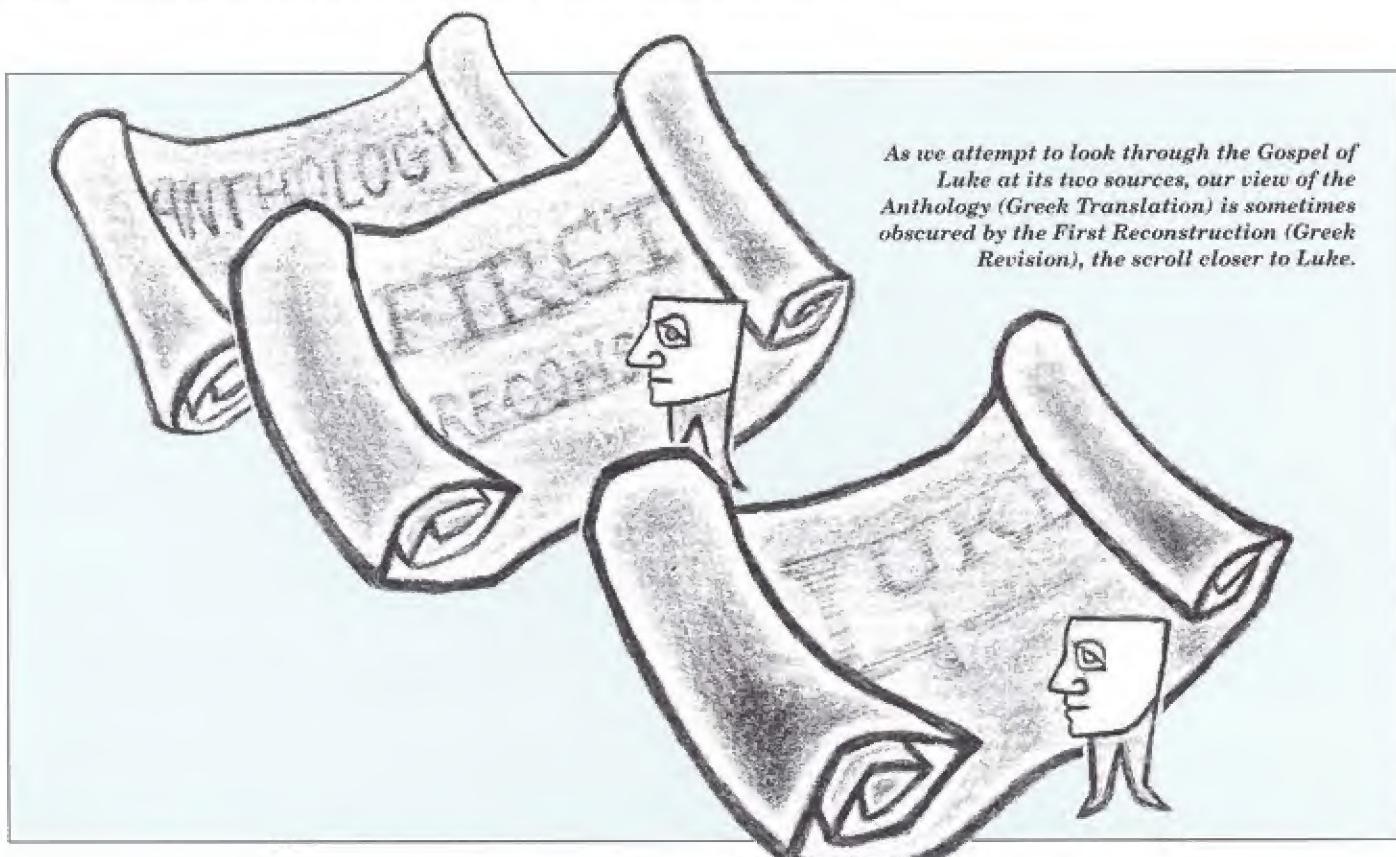
Pursuing this line of reasoning, one can suggest that the first written collection of Jesus' words and deeds was a Greek work.⁵ Perhaps an early bilingual follower of the Way compiled this collection as he sat listening day by day to the Hebrew sermons and lessons of the Twelve or one of the other disciples who had been with Jesus from the beginning of his public ministry

(cf. Acts 1:21–22). As the Twelve preached and taught, they interspersed in their presentations many of the deeds and sayings of Jesus. Perhaps the listener took notes in Hebrew and later translated them to Greek, or simply translated what he heard directly into Greek.⁶

This anonymous, bilingual listener may have been John Mark. Papias, bishop of Hierapolis in Asia Minor during the mid-second century A.D., wrote:

Mark, who was Peter's interpreter, wrote down accurately what he remembered. He did not, however, report the sayings or deeds of the Lord in their exact order. For he had not heard the Lord nor accompanied him, but Peter, later, as he said. Peter adapted his teaching to the needs [of his listeners] making no attempt to give a connected whole of the Lord's sayings. Thus, Mark did not act wrongly in writing certain things as he remembered them. For he had one concern only: to omit nothing of what he had heard and write nothing untrue.⁷

It is difficult to know how much confidence to place in the traditions of Papias (preserved in the writings of Eusebius). However, according to Papias, Mark served as Peter's translator, and wrote down Peter's teaching as he remembered it. Mark's account was not chronologically ordered because Peter's teaching was not a continuous narrative.⁸

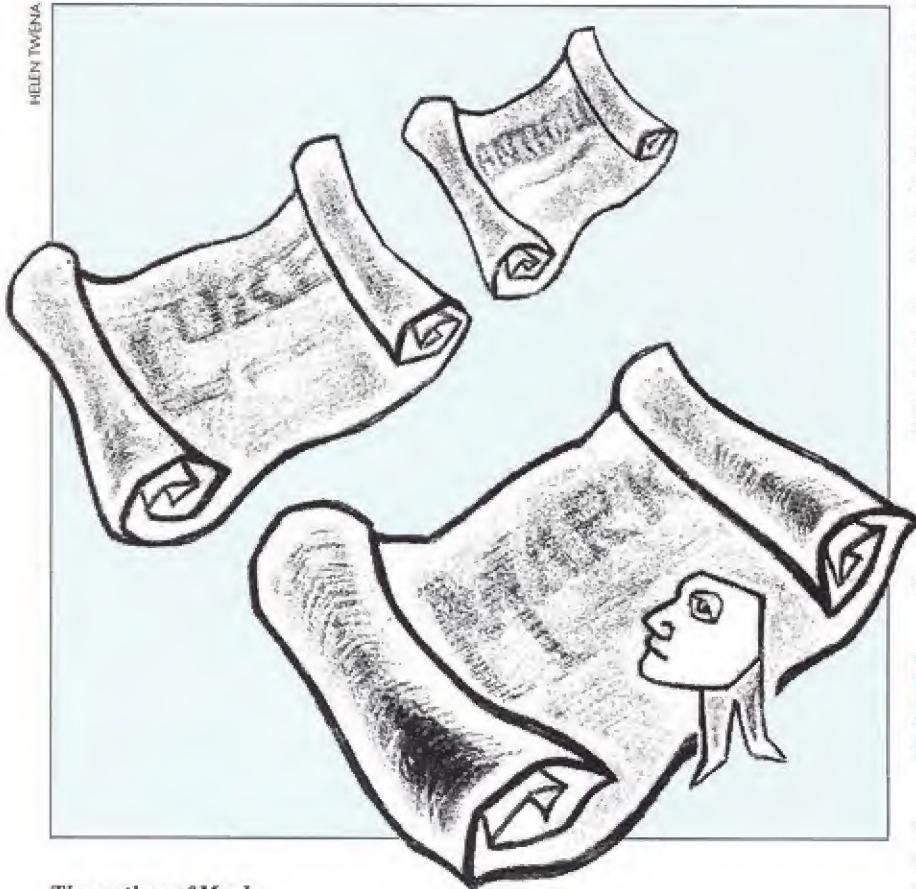


As we attempt to look through the Gospel of Luke at its two sources, our view of the Anthology (Greek Translation) is sometimes obscured by the First Reconstruction (Greek Revision), the scroll closer to Luke.

Loss of Chronology in the Gospels

As Luke hints with the word καθεξῆς (*kathexēs*, consecutive order) in his prologue (Lk. 1:3), the accounts of Jesus' life then circulating were lacking order. To some extent, this

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The author of Mark almost never copies from the Anthology (Greek Translation), preferring to rework those parts of Luke that show hints of chronology.

is also true of the Synoptic Gospels. Though they are interdependent, containing many of the same stories, the authors of Matthew, Mark and Luke do not always present their common stories in the same order.⁹ Apparently, these authors did not know the stories' original order. For example, there are forty-seven stories found exclusively in Matthew and Luke (the so-called Double Tradition), yet the two authors agree only once on where to place these stories. Assuming, as most scholars do, that Matthew and Luke wrote independently unaware of each other's account, one is compelled to conclude that neither knew the original order of the stories.

Furthermore, synoptic stories are apparently independent units that originally had no connection with what now surrounds them. A good example of an isolated, "floating" pericope is Luke's Mary and Martha story (Lk. 10:38–42),

which is just five verses in length. Like most of the units in Luke's special section (9:51–18:14), this incident is neither linked to the verses that precede (Good Samaritan Parable, Lk. 10:29–37) nor to those that follow (Lord's Prayer, Lk. 11:1–4).

Reducing sacred history to literature with an artificial order of progression, though railing against the sensibilities of modern, non-Jewish readers of the Bible, was common in ancient Judaism. The books of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel are examples of such literature. Events in the lives of the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel are not recorded in chronological order.¹⁰ Moreover, the rabbis maintained that events in the Torah are not necessarily arranged according to chronological order: "There is no chronological order [literally, 'early and late'] in the Torah."¹¹

This same tendency seems to be reflected in the placement of books of the Jewish canon. Concern for chronological order was simply not an overriding consideration. Yet when comparing the order of books in the Hebrew Bible to their order in its Greek translation, the Septuagint, one notices a heightened regard for chronological order. Judges is followed by Ruth, Kings by the books of Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther, and Jeremiah by Lamentations.¹²

Loss of Chronology in Rabbinic Literature

From the tannaitic period onward the literature the rabbis produced had as one of its hallmarks a disinterest in preserving sayings or stories within their original context. Tying a story or saying to a verse of Scripture took precedence over preserving the authentic historical context. Homiletical concerns also contributed to the atomization and recombination of rabbinic sayings: elements of rabbinic homilies were reused in the sermons of teachers of later generations in new contexts to make different points. Recycling the sayings of earlier sages was a standard practice. As the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* states:

The *derashot* or discourses of the *tannaim* and *amoraim* have rarely come down in their original form. Ideas that were once coherent are now separated and scattered. In the extant Talmuds they are fragmented, joined with other elements, and removed from their original order. To the words of the early expositors the remarks of the later sages on the same topic have been added....¹³

This distinctive redactive process caused nearly all the sayings in rabbinic literature to be displaced from any sort of extended, historically authentic context. Apparently, the sayings of Jesus underwent the same process and the contexts of his sayings, too, were seldom preserved.

Original Contexts Forgotten

The discomposure, or disarrangement, of Jesus' biography probably began with the first sermons preached by the apostles to the post-resurrection community.¹⁴ The apostles repeated Jesus' teaching, combining it with their own. The Twelve, along with the other disciples who had studied with Jesus, knew his entire biography by heart; however, when they taught or preached they did not present it in chronological fashion. Rather, they incorporated accounts of Jesus' deeds and sections of his teaching within their own expositions. For example, an apostle may have incorporated in his sermon only one of two twin parables with which Jesus originally concluded a teaching since only one of the parables was apropos to the sermon's theme.

Though the stories of Jesus' Hebrew biography were preached and taught piecemeal, as long as they were transmitted orally, they were accurately preserved. It is hard for us today to appreciate the trustworthiness and accuracy of oral transmission within Pharisaic circles of the first century. The disciple of a Pharisaic sage was not permitted to alter even one word of a tradition he had received from his teacher.¹⁵ The disciple was also required to cite his sources.¹⁶ Thus, many rabbinic sayings are introduced, "Rabbi Y in the name of Rabbi X," in other words, "Rabbi Y, who is transmitting a tradition he has received from Rabbi X." It also is hard for us to appreciate the volume of orally transmitted material that disciples of a first-century, Pharisaic sage had committed to memory. They knew a vast oral literature the way Christians know the Lord's Prayer.

We tend to view orally transmitted material as less trustworthy than material transmitted in writing. This is because we are familiar only with the oral transmission of myths such as Viking sagas, which were modified with each retelling. The transmission of oral literature by first-century Pharisaic sages and their disciples approached 100% accuracy, far greater accuracy than can be achieved through written transmission. When literature is transmitted in writing, inevitably mistakes known as "scribal errors" creep in. The sages were aware of this danger. They knew that if their literature were transmitted in writing, it would

lose its high degree of accuracy. Therefore, they forbade its written transmission.¹⁷

Written or Oral Hebrew

Source?

It is unnecessary to postulate a written Hebrew source for Jesus' biography. The first written *Life of Jesus* may have been a Greek document composed by a bilingual disciple of Jesus whose account was based upon the oral teaching delivered in Hebrew by one or more of the twelve apostles and other former full-time apprentices of Jesus.

The protocol of the world of an ancient sage and his disciples may explain why many of the acts and sayings of Jesus in the Gospels have been divorced from their original settings. Explaining the origin of the discrepancies in the story orders of Matthew, Mark and Luke, especially in the Matthean-Lukan Double Tradition, is one of the New Testament scholar's greatest challenges.

JP

1. Private communication.
2. In the first century A.D. the literature of the Pharisees was transmitted orally (see Shmuel Safrai, "Literary Languages in the Time of Jesus," *Jerusalem Perspective* 31 [Mar./Apr. 1991], 3); however, the term "Oral Torah" was not used to describe this literature until near the end of the tannaitic period (c. 200 A.D.).

A unique feature of the Pharisees' method of study was the use of memorized sources. When students and teachers from other streams of first-century Judaism engaged in study, they got out their scrolls. The Essenes, for example, preserved their teaching (*halachot* and Scripture commentary) in writing, and made use of scrolls when studying. The Pharisees, however, brought no scrolls to class. Instead, they brought memorized Scriptures and oral traditions. The material put forward for discussion by Pharisaic sages and students came from their mental storehouses.

Apparently, Jesus belonged to a stream within Judaism, such as the Hasidim, that was closely related to the Pharisees. See "Jesus and the Pharisees" (pp. 3-4) in Shmuel Safrai's "Jesus and the Hasidim," *Jerusalem Perspective* 42, 43 & 44 (Jan.-Jun. 1994), 3-22; see also my series of articles, "Jesus and the Oral Torah," published in *Jerusalem Perspective: "Written and Oral Torah," JP 3 (Dec. 1987), 4; "Did Jesus Observe the Oral Torah?—Blessing," JP 4 (Jan. 1988), 1-2; "The Unutterable Name of God," JP 5 (Feb. 1988), 1-2; "Tithing," JP 6 (Mar. 1988), 1-2; "The Hem of His Garment," JP 7 (Apr. 1988), 1-2; "te fi-LIN," JP 8 (May 1988), 1-2.*

Though it is argument from silence, it is worth noting that in the Gospels we find no reference to the use of scrolls in Jesus' teaching sessions.

3. The prohibition against committing to writing

The author of Matthew copies from the Anthology (Greek Translation) and from Mark. When he finds that both sources have the same story, he weaves the two versions together as he writes his own.

words transmitted orally is found in the Babylonian Talmud, tractate Gittin 60^b. This prohibition also applied to the writing of blessings and prayers (Tosefta, Shabbat 13:4; cf. the parallel in the Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 115^b).

The tradition found in Gittin 60^b is given in the name of Shim'on ben Lakish, a third-century A.D. sage. Prof. Safrai assumes that this halachah was already in force in the early first century A.D. He has shown that rabbinic traditions, unwritten before the third century A.D., can be reliable testimony for the historical reality of the Second Temple period (Shmuel Safrai, "Talmudic Literature as an Historical Source for the Second Temple Period," *Mishkan* 17–18 [1993], 121–137).

4. Sometimes disciples took notes while listening to the teaching of a sage, but these notes were intended for personal use and were not published.

5. This work was not so much a Greek composition

together with the Synoptic Gospels' Semitic flavor, caused Robert Lindsey to posit a written Hebrew source (*The Jesus Sources: Understanding the Gospels* [Tulsa, OK: HaKesher, 1990], p. 13; *Jesus Rabbi & Lord: The Hebrew Story of Jesus Behind Our Gospels* [Oak Creek, WI: Cornerstone Publishing, 1990], p. 207).

8. The Markan document to which Papias refers is not necessarily identical with the canonical Gospel of Mark.

9. Nevertheless, the authors of Matthew, Mark and Luke all tried to arrange the stories in their Gospels chronologically. Apparently, the same can be said for the author of the second of Luke's two sources. A major reason for the writing of these four accounts was perhaps the authors' feeling that their source material lacked chronological order. The author of Luke states that the reason for his writing was to provide a certain Theophilus with an *orderly account*. It is significant that it is Greek writers, with their culture's ideal of order, who feel the need for an "orderly account" of Jesus' life.

10. Rashi, an eleventh-century Jewish commentator, regarded Isaiah 6 as the opening chapter of the book of Isaiah.

11. This saying appears once in the Babylonian Talmud (Pesahim 6^b), four times in the Jerusalem Talmud (e.g., Megillah 70^b, chpt. 1, halachah 5), and eighteen times in the aggadic midrash, often in the name of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi, a sage who lived in the land of Israel in the first half of the third century A.D.

A group of scrolls from Qumran is sometimes designated "Rewritten Torah" or "Reworked Torah" (e.g., 4Q158, 4Q225, 4Q365, 4Q422). Passages from distant contexts in the Torah are combined to produce a new, longer context unified by a common theme or concept. Prof. Shmuel Safrai believes that such Qumran texts are sermons, and that it is inaccurate to refer to them as "Reworked Torah" (private communication).

12. My thanks to Joseph Frankovic for this insight.

13. *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1972), 2:359.

14. The preaching and teaching of the Twelve is perhaps what Acts 2:42 refers to as "the apostles' teaching."

15. "A person must always transmit a tradition in the same words in which he received it from his teacher" (Mishnah, Eduyot 1:3).

16. Babylonian Talmud, Megillah 15^a.

17. Oral transmission in Pharisaic circles within first-century Jewish society is not at all like the oral transmission that many New Testament scholars assume lies back of the Synoptic Gospels. The so-called Oral Hypothesis, accepted by most New Testament scholars for nearly a century, is based on the assumption that Gospel stories, faint memories of the original Semitic stories, are an oral development within the early Greek-speaking church. It is taken for granted that these stories were embellished by Greek-speaking teachers and preachers, growing to their present size as they were told and retold, only to be written down in Greek decades after the death of Jesus.

as a translation of Hebrew oral literature, Jesus' deeds and teaching, memorized by Jesus' first disciples and transmitted by them with a high degree of accuracy.

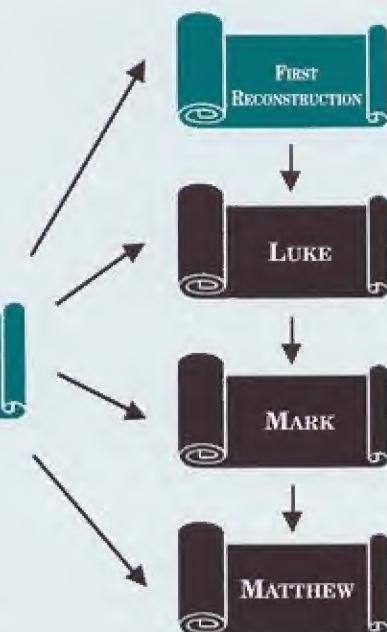
6. It is likely that soon after the death of Jesus there was a demand by Greek-speaking followers of Jesus for a Greek version of Jesus' miracles and teaching.

7. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* III, 39, 15. Papias also wrote that "Matthew put down the words [of the Lord] in the Hebrew language, and others have translated them, each as best he could" (*Ecclesiastical History* III, 39, 16). The Papias tradition about Matthew,

THE TRANSMISSION OF THE LIFE OF JESUS

Assuming the first written account of the words and acts of Jesus may have been a Greek document is a useful insight that can help to clarify the transmission process that culminated in the Synoptic Gospels.* This assumption does not, however, affect the methodology of the Jerusalem School. Its members will continue to analyze the Synoptic Gospels' texts on the basis of Robert Lindsey's theory that Luke had two noncanonical sources, the first of which was also used by Matthew.

(1) LINDSEY'S STEMMA

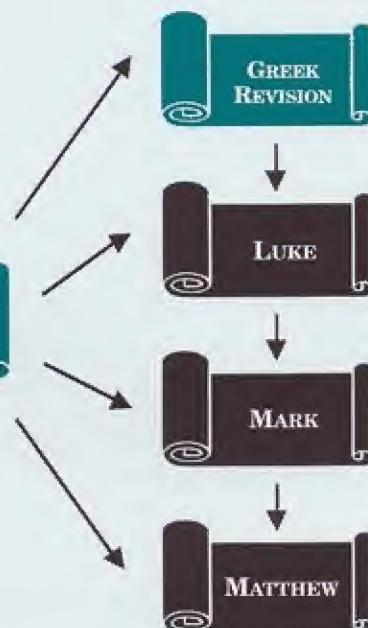
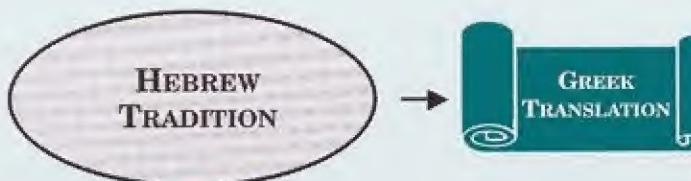


(2) SUGGESTED MODIFICATION OF LINDSEY'S STEMMA

Hebrew Tradition (HT): In the first stage, segments of Jesus' biography (sayings, parables and events in Jesus' life) are transmitted in Hebrew orally via the lessons and sermons of the twelve apostles and other former full-time, apprenticed students of Jesus.

Greek Translation (GT): In the second stage, these segments are translated to Greek by a bilingual, second-generation disciple. The translation is wooden, being an overly literal translation of HT's Hebrew. (GT is synonymous with Lindsey's "Anthology.") These first two stages in the transmission process (HT and GT in the modified stemma), the first oral and the second written, replace Lindsey's first three stages (Hebrew Biography, Greek Translation, Anthology).

Greek Revision (GR): In the third stage, GT is abridged. This revision is the first attempt to reconstruct the biography's original story order. It also is an attempt to improve GT's unidiomatic Greek. (GR is synonymous with Lindsey's "First Reconstruction.")



*As Robert Lindsey developed his synoptic hypothesis he encountered certain phenomena that he could not explain. He observed that the first of Luke's two sources, which Lindsey termed the Anthology or Reorganized Scroll, had no chronological order. He assumed that the Anthology's author had completely reorganized an earlier account, a chronological Greek translation of a written Hebrew Life of Jesus. However, Lindsey could not understand why the author of the Anthology would do such a thing. He also could not understand why the Greek Translation, used by the author of the Anthology, was not used by Luke. Lindsey suggested that the Greek Translation had perhaps quickly fallen into disuse, or that the Anthology was composed before the Greek Translation had gained wide circulation [JP 38 & 39 (May-Aug. 1993), 6; JP 11 (Aug. 1988), 4]. Brad H. Young has entertained the suggestion that the rearrangement of the Gospel narratives reflects the Gospel lectionary readings in the early church [Jesus and His Jewish Parables: Rediscovering the Roots of Jesus' Teaching (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1989), p. 145].

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No. 50 (Jan.–Mar. 1996): Readers' Perspective: David Bivin on the question, "Does it matter which of the Synoptic Gospels was written first?" p. 8; and Nancy Johnsen on the reason for Mark's substitution (opposite Lk. 23:46) of Ps. 22:1 for Ps. 31:5, p. 9; David Bivin, "And' or 'In order to' Remarry" [Lk. 16:18], pp. 10–17, 35–38; *Sidebar*: "First-century Bill of Divorce," p. 17; Mendel Nun, "Gergesa: Site of the Demoniac's Heal-

ing" [Mt. 8:28–34; Mk. 5:1–20; Lk. 8:26–39], pp. 18–25; *Thinking Like the Sages*: Joseph Frankovic, "Stewards of God's Keys" [Mt. 16:17–19], pp. 26–34.

No. 51 (Apr.–Jun. 1996): Readers' Perspective: J. C. Garvey on the approach of Robert Lindsey and the Jerusalem School, p. 6; and David Bivin on John 21:15–17 as an indication that the Gospel of John was originally composed in Greek, p. 7; Robert L. Lindsey, "Paraphrastic Gospels," pp. 10–15; *Sidebar*: "Reading Synoptically," p. 15; Ze'ev Safrai, "Gergesa, Gerasa, or Gadara? Where Did Jesus' Miracle Occur?" [Mt. 8:28–34; Mk. 5:1–20; Lk. 8:26–39], pp. 16–19; R. Steven Notley, "Anti-Jewish Tendencies in the Synoptic Gospels," pp. 20–35, 38; *From Moses' Seat*: Joseph Frankovic, "Esteeming the Jewish People," pp. 36–37.

No. 52 (Jul.–Sept. 1997): Readers' Perspective: Douglas Hadfield, "Shorter Oxford English Dictionary Misses Hebraic Nuance of 'And,'" p. 7; and David Bivin on the question, "Did God the Father abandon his son Jesus?" p. 8; *From Moses' Seat*: Joseph Frankovic, "The Nature of Jesus' Task," p. 12; *Cats in Jerusalem*: David Bivin, "Hendiadys in the Synoptic Gospels," pp. 14–15; *New Discoveries*: David Bivin, "One Torah Reader, Not Seven!" pp. 16–17; Mendel Nun, "What Was Simon Peter Wearing When He Plunged into the Sea?" [Jn. 21:7], pp. 18–23, 37; Shmuel Safrai, "Were Women Segregated in the Ancient Synagogue?" pp. 24–36.

No. 53 (Oct.–Dec. 1997): Readers' Perspective: Steven Notley on the question, "Do the Gospels together comprise a factual account of what Jesus said and did?" p. 8; and Randall Buth on canon, inspiration of Scripture, textual criticism and "reconstructed" sayings of Jesus, pp. 9–10; *New Discoveries*: David Flusser, "Ostracon from Qumran Throws Light on First Church," pp. 12–15; Mendel Nun, "The 'Desert' of Bethsaida" [Mt. 14:15; Mk. 6:35; Lk. 9:12], pp. 16–17, 37; *Gospel Flora*: Gloria E.M. Suess, "Enemies of the Harvest" [Mt. 13:7; Mk. 4:7; Lk. 8:7], pp. 18–23; "Excerpts from David Flusser's Jesus," pp. 24–27; David Bivin, "The Discomposure of Jesus' Biography," pp. 28–33; "JP Ten-year Index (1987–1997)," pp. 34–36.

The above index also appears on the JP Web site (<http://www.JerusalemPerspective.com>). Visitors to this Web site can quickly and easily search the index for an author's name, an article's title, a key Scripture reference, or other information found in the index.



The "Desert" of Bethsaida

(continued from page 17)

philologist Gustaf Dalman (d. 1941) suggested the Aramaic equivalent, *madbera debet sayda*.

Today, "desert," coming to us from the Latin, means an uninhabited, uncultivated, barren, waterless and treeless region. But in the Hebrew and Aramaic of Jesus' time the word for "desert" had two meanings. One was the same as in modern usage. But the other

indicated a "pasturing place."

The "midbar of a city" referred to the area of pasture for flocks belonging to the residents of a city. In my opinion, the translator who first rendered the word in Greek was not aware of this second meaning.

Thus, references to "desert place" in the gospel accounts of the Feeding of the Five Thousand do not indicate a barren, waterless area, but the lush, grazing land surrounding Bethsaida. JP

Above:

Panorama taken from the slopes above the western side of the Bethsaida Valley (May 13, 1996).

Below:

The view southwest across the Bethsaida Valley from the top of et-Tell.



The Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research

The Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research is a consortium of Jewish and Christian scholars who are examining the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) within the context of the languages, land and culture in which Jesus lived. This Jewish-Christian collaboration is unique and unprecedented historically. The results of these scholars' research confirms that Jesus was an organic part of the diverse social and religious landscape of Second Temple-period Judaism. He, like other Jewish sages of his time, taught in Hebrew and used specialized teaching methods to teach foundational Jewish theological concepts such as, for instance, God's abundant grace. Nevertheless, Jesus' teaching was revolutionary in many aspects, particularly in three areas: his radical interpretation of the biblical commandment of mutual love; his call for a new morality; his idea of the kingdom of Heaven (David Flusser, *Jesus*, p. 81).

Future publishing projects of the Jerusalem School include: 1) a series of academic volumes, the first of which will deal with the School's distinctive methodology; 2) an idiomatic translation of the Gospels

and Acts with annotations highlighting the text's Hebraic nuances and briefly explaining the significance of Jesus' words and deeds; 3) the *Jerusalem Synoptic Commentary*, a detailed commentary on the Synoptic Gospels. Current research of Jerusalem School members and others is regularly reported in the pages of JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE.

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*Dr. Robert L. Lindsey (d. May 31, 1995), a founding member of the Jerusalem School, pioneered, together with Prof. Flusser, the methodology upon which the School's synoptic research is based.

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A number of provocative articles will appear in the first issue of *Synoptic Gospels*, including:

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- "The Stages of Redemption History in the Eyes of John the Baptist and Jesus" by David Flusser
- "The Holy Spirit in the Teaching of Jesus and the Sages" by Steven Notley
- "The Source Language of the Wicked Tenants Parable" by Randall Buth
- "Mark 7:1-23: 'Traditions of the Elders'" by Halvor Ronning

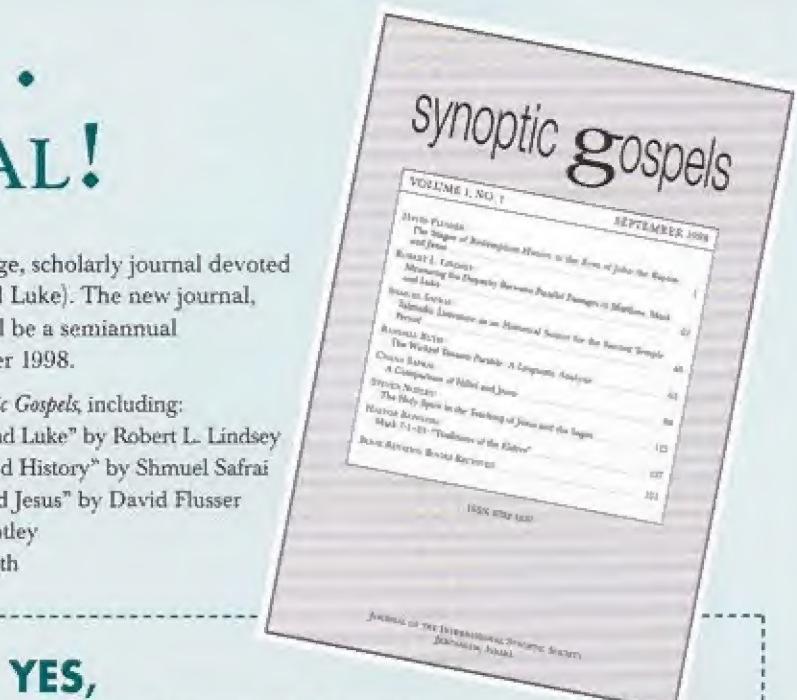
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Glossary

amoraim — (אָמְרִים, 'a-mo-rah'-IM; singular: אָמֵרָה [a-mo-RAH, amora]) the sages of the talmudic period, as distinguished from the earlier tannaim (תַּנִּינִים, ta-na'-IM), the sages of the mishnaic period. Roughly speaking, the tannaim are the sages quoted in the Mishnah and contemporary rabbinic works, while the amoraim are the sages mentioned in the Talmud.

Double Tradition — the pericopae shared only by Matthew and Luke (for instance, the Beatitudes and the Lord's Prayer), in contrast to the Triple Tradition, the pericopae shared by all three Synoptic Gospels (for instance, the Baptism of Jesus and the Stilling of the Storm).

halachah — (הֲלָחוֹת, ha-la-KAH; plural: הֲלָחוֹת, ha-la-KOT, halachot) law, regulation; the legal ruling on a particular issue; the body of Jewish law, especially the legal part of rabbinic literature, thus often the opposite of aggadah.

halachic (ha-lak'ik) — pertaining to halachah.

Oral Torah — (וְר֣וּחַ תֹּהֶבֶל פָּה, to-RAH she-be-AL peh) in contrast to the Written Torah (תּוֹרָה שְׁבָעָת, to-RAH she-bik-TAV), the instruction God gave to Israel at Sinai contained in the five books of Moses. The Oral Torah consists of forty-two verbal commandments given to Moses at Sinai, and the precepts and interpretations implied in the Written Torah. It also came to include the legal decisions of rabbinical courts and the oral traditions received from earlier generations of Torah scholars.

pericope (pe-rik'ə-pē) — an episode or story unit in the Synoptic Gospels. Plural: pericopae.

synoptic — an adjective derived from συνόψεσθαι (*synopsesthai*), a Greek word meaning "to view together or at the same time"; specifically, refers to the first three Gospels of the New Testament.

Synoptic Gospels — Matthew, Mark and Luke.

synoptic problem — the scholarly debate concerning the order in which the Synoptic Gospels were written and the literary sources used by each.

tannaic (ta-nä'ik) — pertaining to the tannaim (תַּנִּינִים, ta-na'-IM), sages from Hillel's time (died c. 10 B.C.) until the generation (c. 230 A.D.) after Rabbi Yehudah ha-Nasi, the compiler of the Mishnah. Singular: תנין (ta-NAH, tanna).

tell — (תַּרְמֹן, tel) a mound created by the debris of successive levels of human occupation.

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Transliteration Key

HEBREW & ARAMAIC

Syllables of transliterated words are separated by dots. Capitalization is used to indicate the accented syllable in words of more than one syllable. See p. 11 of *JP* 23 (Nov./Dec. 1989) for a full description of the transliteration system used in JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE.

Consonants

ח — ח (silent)
ב — ב (like b in bed)
ו — ו (like v in very)
ג — ג (like g in gold)
ד — ד (like d in day)
ה — ה (like h in horn, or silent)
ו — ו (like v in very)
ז — ז (like z in zeal)
כ — כ (voiceless guttural [no English equivalent])
ט — ט (like t in tip)
י — י (like y in yard, or silent)
ך — כ (like k in kite)
ך — כ (like ch in Scottish *loch*)
ל — ל (like l in let)
מ — מ (like m in met)
נ — נ (like n in net)
ס — ס (like s in sit)
פ — פ (voiced guttural [no English equivalent])
ר — ר (like p in port)
ף — פ (like f in fit)
צ — צ (like ts in nets)
ק — ק (like k in kite)
ר — ר (a trilling or gargling r sound)
ש — ש (like sh in shell)
ט — ט (like s in sit)
ת — ת (like t in tip)

Vowels

(The נ is used here as a point of reference.)
א — א (like a in father; rarely like o in oh)
א, א — א (like a in father)
א, א — א (like e in net, or e in prey, or somewhere in between)
א, א — א (like e in net)
א, א — א (like i in ski)
א, א, א — א (like o in oh)
א, א — א (like u in flu)
א — א (silent, or as short as e in happening, or as long as e in net)

Diphthongs

אַי — ai (pronounced īh-ee)
אַו — oy (pronounced ôh-ee)
אַו — ui (pronounced oo-ee)

GREEK

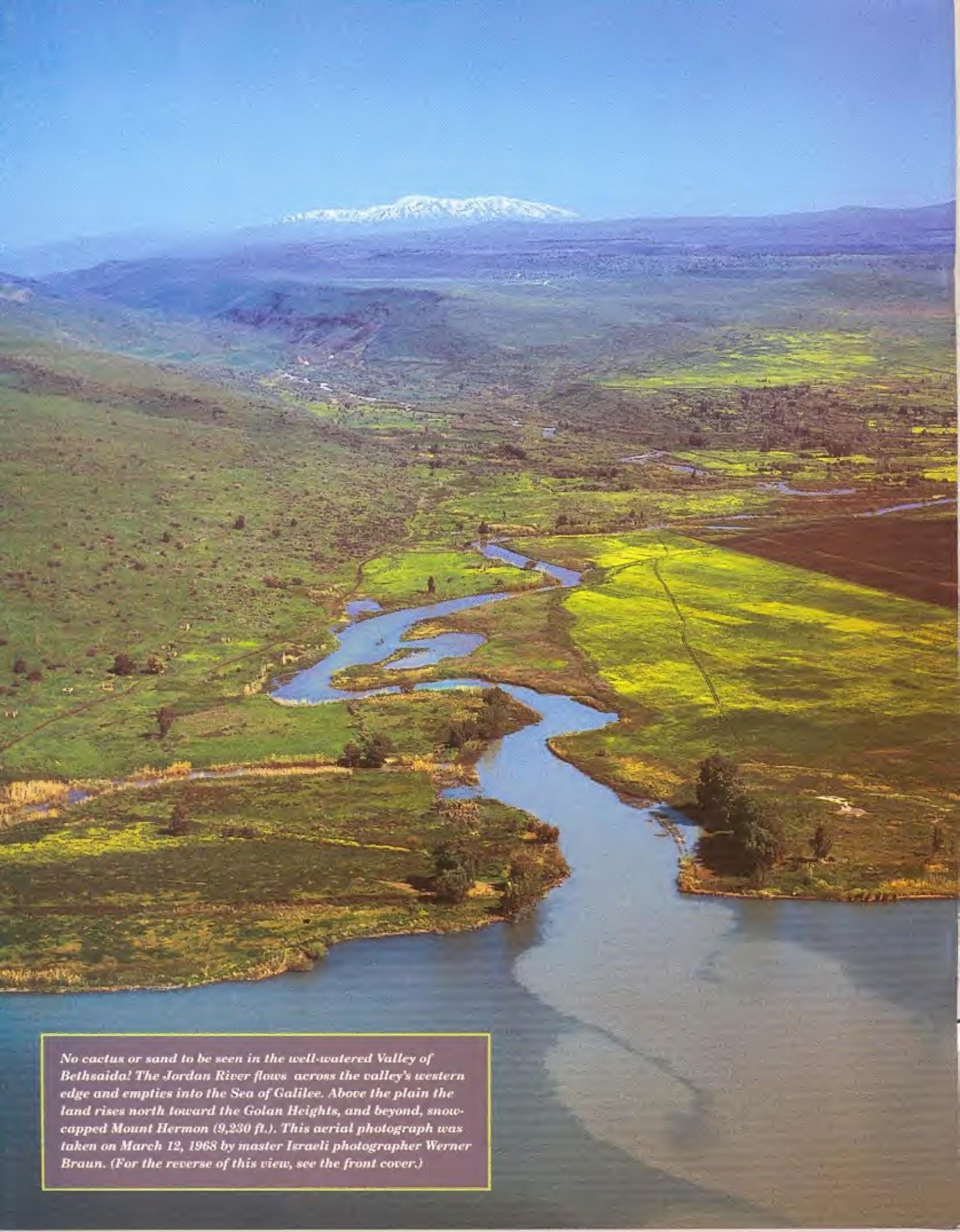
Unlike Hebrew, Greek has upper and lower-case letters. The letter Η represents the rough-breathing sign ('). The smooth-breathing sign (') is not transliterated. The iota subscript (the letter iota [ι] written beneath α, η and ω—α, η and ω) is omitted in our transliterations. The combinations γγ, γκ, γξ and γχ are transliterated "ng," and pronounced like the "ng" in "angle."

Α α — α (like a in father)
Β β — β (like b in bed)
Γ γ — γ (like g in gold)
Δ δ — δ (like d in day)
Ε ε — ε (like e in net)
Ζ ζ — ζ (like dz in adz)
Η η — η (like e in prey)
Θ θ — θ (like th in thin)
Ι ι — ι (like i in ski)
Κ κ — κ (like k in kite)
Λ λ — λ (like l in let)
Μ μ — μ (like m in met)
Ν ν — ν (like n in net)
Ξ ξ — ξ (the ks sound, like x in wax)
Ο ο — ο (like o in oh)
Π π — π (like p in port)
Ρ ρ — ρ (like r in run)
Σ σ, σ* — σ (like s in sit)
Τ τ — τ (like t in tip)
Υ υ — υ (like French u or German ü)
Φ φ — φ (like ph in graphic)
Χ χ — χ (like ch in Scottish *loch* or German *ach*)
Ψ ψ — ψ (like ps in dips)
Ω ω — ω (like o in oh)

Diphthongs

αι — ai (like ai in aisle)
αι — au (like ou in our)
ει — ei (like ei in feign)
ευ — eu (pronounced êh-oo [no exact equivalent in English])
ηυ — êu (pronounced êh-oo [no exact equivalent in English])
οι — oi (like oi in oil)
ου — ou (like ou in group)
υι — ui (like ui in quit)

*The form of the letter when it is the last letter of a word.



No cactus or sand to be seen in the well-watered Valley of Bethsaida! The Jordan River flows across the valley's western edge and empties into the Sea of Galilee. Above the plain the land rises north toward the Golan Heights, and beyond, snow-capped Mount Hermon (9,230 ft.). This aerial photograph was taken on March 12, 1968 by master Israeli photographer Werner Braun. (For the reverse of this view, see the front cover.)